

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS,
By THE LATE PETER BAYLEY, Esq.

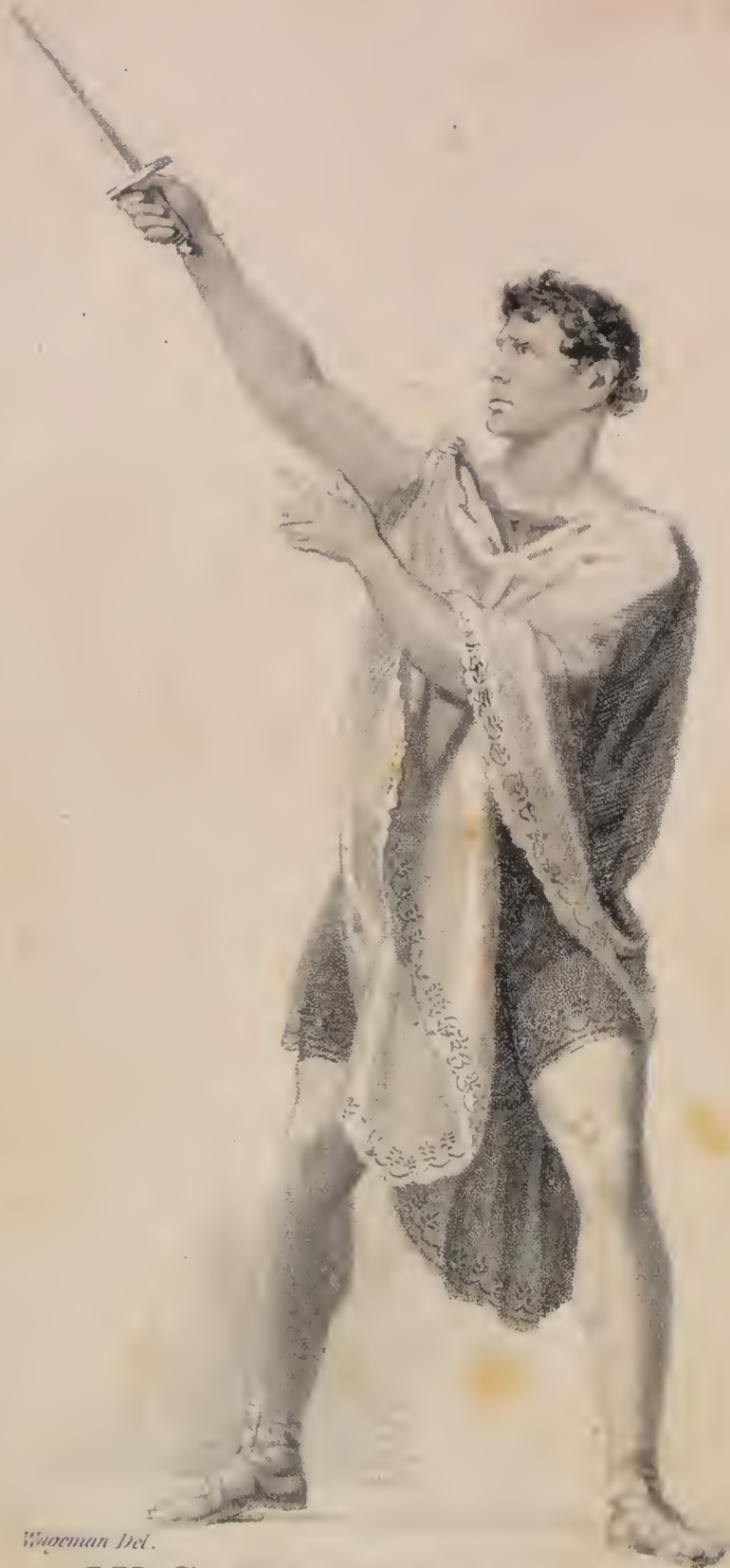
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

A DESCRIPTION of the COSTUME, Cast of the CHARACTERS, Sides of ENTRANCE and EXIT, RELATIVE POSITIONS of the Performers on the Stage, and the whole of the STAGE BUSINESS, as now performed in the THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

Embellished with a Wood Engraving, from an original Drawing, made expressly for this Work, by Mr. T. JONES, and executed by Mr. WHITE.







Wagman Del.

Woodcut by St.

M^R C. KEMBLE AS ORESTES.

PUBLISHED BY JOHN CUMBERLAND 19 LUDGATE HILL

Wm. Charles Hall

ORESTES IN ARGOS;

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

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PRINTED FROM THE OCTAVO COPY, WITH REMARKS.

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AS FIRST PERFORMED AT THE

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ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 1825.

EMBELLISHED WITH A WOOD ENGRAVING, FROM AN ORIGINAL
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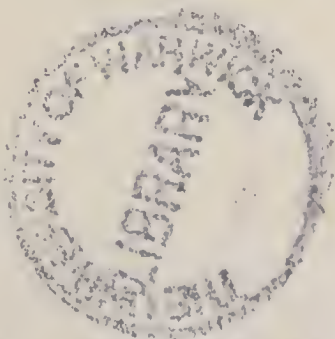
ALSO A PORTRAIT OF MR. CHARLES KEMBLE.

LONDON:

JOHN CUMBERLAND, 19, LUDGATE HILL.

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MEMOIR

OF

MR. CHARLES KEMBLE.

ROGER KEMBLE, a manager of some poor provincial company, gave birth to the brightest constellation of histrionic excellence that ever was exhibited in a single family. The brightest stars, it is needless to say, were Mr. John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons; but though he does not attain to their brightness, the subject of our memoir, their youngest brother, Charles, is by no means devoid of brilliancy.

He was born in 1775 at Brabant, which was the birth-place of Mrs. Siddons also. He received at an early age such collegiate education as Douay, where he was sent by his brother, could bestow. About the age of sixteen he was appointed to the situation of clerk at the post-office: but nature is not to be repressed.—The family taste was too strongly implanted in him to suffer him to remain in this situation. Like other clerks,

“Doom’d their father’s views to cross,
He penn’d a stanza when he should engross;”

or, at all events, he occupied himself with spouting the stanzas of others, and soon abandoned the post-office for the stage. Sheffield was the spot which had the honour of his *debüt*; Orlando, in ‘As You Like It,’ was his first character, for which his juvenile figure and air—he was then only seventeen—well qualified him.

After some provincial campaigning, he came to London—the point to which all talent gravitates, by a sort of natural attraction. His first character, (which he performed on the very night of the opening of Drury-lane Theatre, 21st of April, 1794,) was Malcolm, in Macbeth. He rose in his profession rapidly. George Colman engaged him, in 1800, for the Haymarket, where

he was a great favourite, until illness compelled him to relinquish all his engagements, to take a trip on the continent, then opened to our tourists by the peace of Amiens. In 1803 he returned, and found his distinguished brother manager of Covent-garden, to which theatre he, of course, transferred his services. He has, we believe, remained almost invariably attached to that house ever since ; and, in due course of time, has risen to be its manager.

Besides his efforts as a performer, he is a dramatic author also. From the 'Deserteur' of Mercier he has produced the 'Point of Honour,' a piece in three acts, which is still occasionally performed. It is a languid and heavy composition, as almost all the French pieces of that school are, and has not been improved by Mr. Kemble's lumbering prose. A translation from Dieulafoy, 'Plot and Counterplot, or, the Portrait of Cervantes,' is more successful. The 'Wanderer, or, the Rights of Hospitality,' from Kotzebue's 'Edward in Scotland,' and 'Kamschatka, or, the Slave's Tribute,' from a play by the same superficial writer, lingered for a short time on the stage. Besides these, he is the author of the 'Child of Chance,' a farce produced in 1812, and the 'Brazen Bust,' a melo-drama, in 1813,—pieces which ran their three nights, and then went to the tomb of all the Capulets. Mr. Kemble's pen, as will be seen by this list of his performances, has not been successful ; but he may console himself with the reflection, that few have shone in the two departments of writing and acting, and that Shakspeare himself, though an actor, was but a very indifferent one.

Mr. Kemble's powers, if they be limited, are, nevertheless, highly respectable and useful. In Coriolanus, and characters of that stamp, he has been a failure, and a more provoking one, when contrasted with the admirable acting of his brother in that part. His Falstaff has been still worse. No manager would have put him into that character except himself. But if he fails in these, there are other departments of the drama in which he is supereminently successful. No man at present upon the stage, except Kean, has so completely identified himself with so many attractive Shaksperian characters. Faulconbridge is entirely his own ; and a gallant piece of acting, in every point of view, it is. He is equally successful in Laertes and Benedict. His Romeo *was* excellent ; but we fear

that it is impossible for a man of fifty, no matter how carefully he is made up, or how skilfully the invasions of age are concealed, to support the character of the youthful Italian lover. George Barnwell he performed with a great deal of taste and pathos, and was, perhaps, the only man who ever succeeded in making any thing worth praising of that prosing and uninteresting part.

He fills admirably the character of a gentleman in comedy,—one of the most arduous departments on the stage, and of as rare occurrence as that of a first-rate tragedy hero. Charles Surface, for instance, by him, is a finished piece of acting. There is one peculiar species of this line which is entirely his own—we mean, those characters in which a mixture exists of the *roué* with the man of principle and feeling; as Cassio, in *Othello*, Charles Oakley, in the *Jealous Wife*, and some others. The blending of the dissipated with the repentant portions of these characters, we may safely say, never met so adequate a representative as Mr. Charles Kemble.

But in general there is something that we miss when we see him perform. We except from this censure, however, most of the characters enumerated above. He never reaches the heart. He is always correct, well prepared in his part, possessed of a thorough comprehension of his author's meaning, and of course rarely offends. It is impossible to deny that the acting is elegant; equally impossible to assert in general that it is striking. This is what makes a *good* actor; it never will make a *great* one. Every man of taste would prefer a performer, who, if he shocks you occasionally with his errors, astonishes you also by his beauties, to one, who, equable in elegant mediocrity, seldom exposes himself to your censure, and as seldom extorts your vehement applause.

Of Mr. Kemble, as a manager, every person connected with his establishment speaks in terms of praise. It is complained of him and his brother manager of Drury, that he lends his house too much to spectacle and other inferior walks of the drama. It would be well for those who make the complaint if they inquired whether this line of conduct is adopted from choice or necessity. A manager must follow the taste of his audiences

CRITICAL REMARKS.

No subject afforded so much material for tragedies to the Grecian dramatists as the dreadful events which darken the annals of the royal houses of Cadmus and Atreus. In particular, the murder of Agamemnon, after his triumphal return from Troy, by Clytemnestra and her paramour Ægisthus, with its bloody vengeance by Orestes, appears to have been a favourite subject: for each of the three great dramatists, whose plays have remained to us, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have left a play on this event, and hundreds have, in vain, perished. Æschylus, in his 'Chæphori,' exhibits the usual characteristics of daring, sublime, and awful poetry—sometimes obscure, sometimes distressing, but always impressive. Euripides, as usual, succeeds best in the pathetic, and the inculcation of moral doctrine—sinking also, as usual, into ridiculous incidents and creeping language, which, as all Greek leaders know, made him the butt of the great comic writer of Athens. Sophocles, in his *Electra*, not so sublime as Æschylus, or so pathetic as Euripides, (for he was, perhaps, a man of less original powers than either,) knew better how to manage his talents, and has produced, on the whole, a more effective drama. Nothing can surpass the melody of his language, or the easy but beautiful manner in which he develops his plot.

Of those who, in modern times, have taken this thrilling subject for their theme, Alfieri is the most distinguished. He was, indeed, a wonderful writer; but, in writing his tragedies, he forgot, as Grimm justly observes of him, that the Muse of tragedy ought to dip her pen in tears, not in blood. His dark and severe imagination was well qualified to give due force to all the horrors which a drama on the subject of Orestes would, of necessity, call forth; and he has succeeded accordingly. In our own literature, no one of name has tried the subject. Orestes appears, it is true, in

Ambrose Phillips's 'Distressed Mother;' but, in that very sleepy adaptation from the French, he appears in different tragic circumstances; and the Grecian idea of his character is, besides, completely spoiled. This abstinence from choosing the death of Clytemnestra as the plot of a play, is attributable to two circumstances—first, the revolting nature of the action—the slaying of a mother by her son, on which the plot must turn; and, secondly, our early intimacy with the Greek authors, which makes us, in general, unwilling to meddle with any thing they have done before us.

Mr. Bayley, in the following play, has, however, made the attempt, and produced a very respectable and poetical drama. To suit our ideas, he has deviated from the original Greek story, in several particulars; and he confesses, that, in some respects, he is indebted to Alfieri. With a great deal of judgment, he has, in some measure, reconciled to our feelings the revolting circumstance to which we have already alluded, by making Orestes kill his mother by an accidental blow; and he has lessened the horror which we, of necessity, feel towards such a character as Clytemnestra, by representing her, throughout, as penitent, and giving her the most tender maternal feelings for her children. In this respect he has, in some degree, perhaps unconsciously, been indebted to Shakspeare's delineation of the Queen, in Hamlet. Ægisthus also, as he has managed him, bears some resemblance to Claudius, in the same wonderful tragedy.

The character of Orestes is, of course, the leading one; and it was admirably supported by Mr. Charles Kemble. The gallant bearing of the young prince—his scarcely-suppressed indignation during his conference with Ægisthus—his tender recognition of his sister—and his impassioned behaviour, when the hour of vengeance had, at last, arrived, and its means were fully in his power—were all admirably depicted. It was, in every respect, a character suited for his powers. In one or two scenes, perhaps, Kean might have surpassed him; but he could not have equalled him in the general delineation of the part.

The character of Electra—stern, lofty, and proud—is finely contrasted with that of the more gentle and feminine Chrysothemis. Both these parts found excellent representatives in miss Lacy and miss Jones.

The introduction of a chorus on our stage is an inno

vation to which we cannot, in general, give our approbation. Our theatre has none of the circumstances which rendered the introduction of the chorus, in the ancient plays, a matter of necessity. It is not very intrusive in this tragedy, yet it might be well omitted. Nor has Mr. Bayley thoroughly conceived the principle of Fate, which was the leading idea of all the Greek tragedies. Take it all in all, it is a play which, we think, reads better than it acts, though it acts very well. The versification is solemn, melodious, and flowing—the descriptions poetical—the sentiments high and moral—and the situations well brought out. Some of its very poetical merits must be sacrificed for stage effect; and passages which will delight in the closet, very often seem but tedious prattle when represented. On the whole, it was a great indication of dramatic talent, which, we regret, the premature death of its author has deprived us of all chance of seeing verified.

AUTHOR'S ADVERTISEMENT.

In the first part of this Tragedy, I am much indebted to Sophocles; in the lat'ér, to Alfieri. One incident was suggested by the "Oreste" of Voltaire.

Costume.

ÆGISTHUS.—Long white shirt, down to his aneles, trimmed round the bottom and wrists with gold ; a large crimson cloth robe, trimmed inside and out with rich gold embroidery ; crimson sandals, embroidered with gold ; fillet round his head ; flesh legs.

ORESTES.—Lilach-coloured fine cloth short tunic, embroidered with black round the bottom ; black belt, with white embroidery ; white hat worn on his back ; white square robe, embroidered with lilach, the colour of the tunic : white sandals, flesh legs and arms.

PYLADES.—White calico tunie ; trimmed crimson white robe, quite plain, gold balls at the ends ; russet sandals ; and white hat worn on his back. Flesh legs and arms.

ARCAS.—Puce-coloured shirt, quite plain ; light brown robe ; russet sandals. Flesh legs and arms.

ADRASTUS.—White tunic ; yellow breast-plate, with short lambrakins, trimmed with black gold studs ; scarlet robe, worn on the left shoulder only ; black sandals, and yellow greaves, up to the knee, trimmed with black. Flesh legs and arms.

ÆSCHINES.—Plain puce-coloured tunic only ; flesh legs and arms ; russet sandals.

CRATIDAS.—Plain brown short tunic, and puce-coloured robe, worn on the left shoulder only ; flesh legs and arms ; russet sandals.

EUDAMIPPUS.—Puce-coloured tunic, and brown robe on left shoulder ; flesh legs and arms ; russet sandals.

DAULIAS.—Plain drab tunie ; leather belt ; flesh legs and arm old black sandals.

LYCUS.—A plain dress, like Daulias ; and a soldier's dress same as Adrastus, without the scarlet robe.

SOLDIERS.—Same as Adrastus—very white tunic, yellow breast-plate, &c.

CLYTEMNESTRA.—White dress, embroidered with gold ; and crimson robe, like Ægisthus.

ELECTRA.—Slate-coloured cotton long dress, and drapery.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.—White dress, and drapery.

NEMESIS AND THE FURIES.—Gray and white dresses, with snakes on their heads and round the waist.

Cast of the characters at the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden, 1825.

<i>Ægisthus</i> Mr. Bennett.	<i>Lycus</i> Mr. Evans.
<i>Orestes</i> Mr. Kemble.	<i>Clytemnestra</i> Mrs. Bartley.
<i>Pylades</i> Mr. Cooper.	<i>Electra</i> Miss Lacy.
<i>Arcas</i> Mr. Egerton.	<i>Chrysothemis</i> Miss Jones.
<i>Adrastus</i> Mr. T. Cooper.	<i>Nemesis</i> Miss Hammersley
<i>Æschines</i> Mr. Horrebaw.	<i>Tisiphone</i> ... Mrs. Vedy.
<i>Cratidas</i> Mr. Ley.	<i>Alecto</i> Miss Hallande.
<i>Eudamippus</i> Mr. Baker.	<i>Megara</i> Miss Henry.
<i>Daulias</i> Mr. Chapman.	

SCENE.—*The Palace of the Pelopidæ, the adjacent city of Argos, and vicinity.*

Time—that of representation.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Conductors of this Work print no Plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from their own personal observations, during the most recent performances.

The instant a *Character* appears upon the Stage, the point of *Entrance*, as well as every subsequent change of *Position*, till its *Exit*, is noted, with a fidelity which may, in all cases, be relied on; the object being, to establish this Work as a *Standard Guide to the Stage business*, as now conducted on the London boards.

EXITS and ENTRANCES.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*. The following view of the Stage with Five Performers in front, will, it is presumed, fully demonstrate the *Relative Positions*.

*** The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage facing the Audience.







ORESTES IN ARGOS.

Orestes. Where lurks the murderous and sensual beast?
Ha! art thou found? Ye Gods, I thank you!—Die—
Die—a thousand deaths in one!

ACT V. SCENE 3.

J. C. 12
M. J.
ORESTES IN ARGOS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Tomb of Agamemnon, on the skirts of a Grove near the Palace of the Pelopidae.—A tempestuous morning, immediately before sun-rise.—Anful and strange music.—Stage dark.*

Enter NEMESIS and the Furies, L. S. E.

Nem. Swiftly on your viewless path,

Come! ye ministers of wrath!

Come! It is the fated hour:

Come! obey the words of power.

[*Thunder.*

Furies. We come!

In the day's broad noon of light,

In the deepest gloom of night,

Over land and over flood,

Steady to the scent of blood,

We come, we come!

Nem. Again the round of time

Hath brought the day of crime:

It shall not pass away

Until ye seize your prey.

Furies. Ere of twilight shades the last

And faintest from the earth hath pass'd,

With a bound

'That shakes the ground,

Around, around,

Pass we thrice around the tomb,

And ratify the murderer's doom—

Around, around, around.

Nem. Shade of the mighty, hear!

And sleep in peace! Revenge is near.

Ere ye seize your shrieking prey,

Raise your descant of dismay.

Furies. We come !

In the day's broad noon of light,
In the deepest gloom of night,
Over land and over flood,
Steady to the scent of blood,
We come, we come !

[*They move round the Tomb, and vanish up the steps, R. U. E.*]

SCENE II.—*The court of a palace, terminated by an open colonnade.—The sun is risen on a stormy sky.*

Enter ELECTRA, L., in the habit of a slave, bearing a vase, with herbs and chaplets of flowers.

Elec. How long, ye high-throned deities, whose power
Strikes terror on the heart of guilt, how long
Shall vengeance linger ? Firmly holds my soul
Her fix'd dependence on your righteous law.
Awhile suspended o'er the murderer's head
The inevitable bolt may pause. He girds him
With adamantine towers, and walls of brass,
And fondly deems Heaven's justice sleeps for ever
But o'er his confident security
High watch the keen-eyed power of vengeance keeps,
The nearer even then when thought far off.
—How sleep Ægisthus and my guilty mother
Amid the storm that all night long has raged,
I may not guess. Sure they should watch the heavens,
If I, their victim, in the turbid sky
Strange portents read. and in the howling winds
Tremendous sounds of coming vengeance hear.
—With impious rites and festivals each year
Ægisthus celebrates this day's return.
But ere the smoke of his rich sacrifice
Have climb'd to heaven, myself will occupy
The gates of prayer ; and such poor offering
As this my abject state commands will make,
And pray for the return of lost Orestes.
But who comes forth ?

[*She places her offerings in an intercolumniation of the court, R.*]

Enter CHRYSOTHEMIS and Attendants L., with offerings.

My sister ! Is it thou ?
A sister's footstep should awake no fears.
What are those offerings ? What on such a day

Comes from the mansion where Ægisthus rules,
That Agamemnon's daughter ought to bring?

Chry. Dear sister, chide me not; let me be quick
To warn thee of the fury of Ægisthus.

Elec. He well may hate whom he so deeply injures.

Chry. To thy reproaches he ascribes the fears
That shake my mother's soul in nightly dreams.
New rigours he prepares. Submission still
May mitigate the fierceness of his rage.

Far less severe had been thy lot, my sister,
If thou like me hadst known to place a guard
Upon thy thoughts, and been content in secret
To breathe thy daily prayers for retribution.

Elec. Yes—thou enjoy'st the fruits of slavish fear.
Thou, in apartments that befit thy rank,
But ill beseem our murder'd father's daughter,
Art served with state.—I answer my high calling,
That, bearing a slave's habit, must lodge here,
Amid the tyrant's menials, in the court.
I had my choice: thine is the degradation—
For I am Agamemnon's daughter still.

Chry. Severely dost thou chide me. To what end
Feed'st thou this keen remembrance of his death?

Elec. Art thou his daughter, and dost ask my purpose?
What thought may occupy my soul but vengeance?

Chry. Whence canst thou hope revenge?

Elec. Orestes lives.

Chry. He lives, indeed, an exile far away,
Pursued by his remorseless foe, a price
Set on his princely head; and strangers give
The bread that in dependence he must eat.
He comes not to thy wish: by snares beset,
He ne'er may see his native land.

Elec. What then!
Shall that atrocious deed pass unrevenged?
Ere now a woman's arm hath well achieved
The vengeance fit for stronger instruments.
Ægisthus from a woman's arm had help;
A woman's arm, should all else fail, may reach him.

Chry. I tremble at thy words; my very nature
Shrinks from thy fearful purpose. Dear Electra,
Full portion hast thou of our mother's daring.

Elec. When I behold the adulterous murderer
Exalted to my father's pride of place,
Lording it over Argos, rioting
In wealth our lost Orestes should enjoy;

When by the side of her vile paramour
 She whom I blush to call a mother lies,
 —(No daughter's duty will I owe her more),—
 My bosom swells, my thoughts defy restraint.
 Canst thou show ought in Clytemnestra's life
 May lessen my abhorrence of her crimes?

Chry. The chargee'en now imposed on me, these wreaths,
 Destined to Agamemnon's sacred tomb,
 And these libations, speak at least her sorrow.
 When has remorse ceased on her heart to feed?
 Fear haunts her day, and dreadful dreams each night
 Make terrible her sleep.

Elec. 'Tis well decreed,
 That peace may never be the fruit of guilt.

Chry. Who comes?

Elec. 'Tis Arcas.

Enter ARCAS, L.

Arcas. Be not seen together,
 Respected daughters of my honour'd lord.
 Ægisthus soon comes forth. Even now his rage
 Against Electra breathes forth furious threats.

Chry. My warning comes too late.

Arcas. Throughout the night
 A strange confusion has alarm'd the palace:
 Lights glided through the halls, and vanish'd quickly:
 And cries of terror from the royal chamber
 Were heard, by stillness follow'd. Loud and harsh
 At times the accents of Ægisthus' voice
 Rose on the night; at times were heard half smother'd
 As by an effort. Soon as he arose,
 He call'd for me. His gloomy countenance
 And bloodless lip betray'd his troubled mind
 "Go seek Electra," sullenly he cried
 In broken accents. "Let her in the court
 Await the time when I come forth. Too long
 Has my untimely pity, seconding
 The intercession of her wavering mother,
 Won me to leave that serpent in my path,
 More wisely crush'd. She waits a time to sting
 That never shall arrive. Call her:—this day
 I seal her fate, and know myself secure."

Chry. Oh wretched daughters of a wretched house!
 What power will save you?

Arcas. Sudden is the time,
 And calls for quick resolve: no lamentation

Must now be heard. [*To CHRY.*] Thy presence will
but sharpen

The thoughts already fatal to Electra.

Retire, then, ere Ægisthus comes.

Elec.

He counsels

Wisely, though bitterly. Retire, my sister.

We meet again :—whate'er the tyrant's purpose,

His cruelty will grant us one embrace,

And give my last of tears to flow with thine.

Chry. The gods look down upon thee !—Oh my sister,

Be wise, be moderate. Think in this hour

How much my peace upon Electra hangs. [*Exit, L.*

Arcas. Let my entreaties aid her pious prayer :

So by submission and more gentle speech

The tyrant's anger may be lull'd awhile.

But see who comes.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA, L.—ARCAS retires, c.

Cly. My child !

Elec. That name sounds strangely.

'Tis not Crysothemis that stands before thee.

Hast thou another child ? My ears acknowledge

Hardly the unwonted title. What am I

But a poor slave, a menial of the court ?

So Clytemnestra and Ægisthus will.

Cly. If he whom thou so long hast mourn'd was dear,

Thou wilt not now refuse upon his tomb

To pour libations.

Elec. Simple off'rings—

Such only have you left me power to bring,

E'en now I had prepared.

Cly. Then let us haste

To the sad duty.

Elec. Whither would'st thou with me ?

Cly. [*Hesitating.*] To—thy departed father's tomb.

Elec. Thy husband's,

Thou rather should'st have said. Is that a hand

To offer there ? Bethink thee from what bed,

New-risen, thou comest, warm from Ægisthus' side.

And dar'st thou thus affront the sacred tomb ?

Hast thou the heart to look on it ? Methinks

Thy presence should call up the mighty dead,

And bring him, frowning, through the marble walls,

With all thy mortal gashes fresh upon him,

To scare thee from the soil to which thy feet

Were profanation.

Cly. Oh, forbear! forbear!
Too lately on these eyes that dreadful form
Hath glared in terror. Oh! too well thy words
Recall the appalling vision that still haunts me.
At the full banquet, or in my still chamber,
Suddenly it sits by me. Wheresoe'er
I turn, it oft glides past me awfully.
But oh! last night!—It harrows up my soul
To think upon the menace of those eyes.
And the red tide that gush'd forth full upon me,
Palpably warm.

Elec. 'Tis terrible.

Cly. [*After a pause, and collecting herself.*] Alas!
No comfort have I in Ægisthus. He,
Morose and full of bitterness, requites me
With gloomy looks, reproaches, and contempt.
A life of fear and misery is mine.

Elec. Else were the gods unjust. Th' eternal voice
Of Justice hath assign'd one lot to all
Whom guilt's accursed band hath leagued together.
Most foully massacred by thy contrivance,
Lies in his grave the vanquisher of Tröy,
Thy sometime husband. In his bed thy colleague
In that most fell and bloody act reposes,
And fills the print of my dear father's limbs.
My wrongs to this are light. Nor to me only
Hast thou proved cruel and unnatural.
Bethink thee of thy son, the wrong'd Orestes
Snatch'd by these hands from that foul butchery,
And saved by sudden flight. Oh, think of him,
The rightful lord of all this fair domain,
The rightful master of this royal palace,
Heir of the wealth in which Ægisthus riots,
Pamp'ring his coward and effeminate soul.
Think of him—now a wanderer, in need,
Though born to empire—rest of home and friends—
And this thy doing. Well might wonder take us
If thus these things might be, and thou know comfort.

Cly. Thy words are arrows to my soul. What course
Of action can I take?

Elec. Make proclamation
For wrong'd Orestes through all realms: push down
Thy blood-stain'd feodary from the seat of power:
Be his base limbs diswarranted of the purple:
With thine own hand pluck from his brows the round
True kings alone are privileged to wear:
And let my brother's foot spurn his vile neck,

As he ascends his high ancestral throne.—
Such reparation, yet, thy power can offer
To fatherless Orestes.

Cly. Name him not.
The sound is fatal to me; ever ominous
Of horror and destruction. As I hear
The name, my heart's blood freezes.—Length of days
Grant him, ye Gods! But never, never more
Let him be seen in Argos!

Ellec. With such thoughts,
'Tis mockery to speak of penitence.
Thou would'st be free from all the effect of guilt,
Yet cling'st to that for which thy soul embraced
This desperate condition, yielding nothing
Of all that taints thee. Even such a mother
Orestes finds thee still, as Agamemnon
Found thee a wife.

Cly. Still—still with bitterness
'Tis thy delight to vex thy mother's soul.
Oft has my prayer turn'd from thee threaten'd danger;
And this is my reward.—But now I hear
The footsteps of Ægisthus.—Frame thy speech
Submissively, or tremble.

Ellec. I shall bear me,
Befall what may, as Agamemnon's daughter.

Æg. [*Without, L.*] Guards! wait my coming by the
Propylæum.

Enter ÆGISTHUS, L.

—Too long our patient folly has endured
The clamorous licence of that rebel tongue.
Our power condemn'd, bold censure of our life,
The common ear stuff'd with vile calumnies,
And treasonous threats against our safety breathed,
Call for sharp chastisement. Our long forbearance,
That should have shamed thy insolence, has nourish'd
Thy uncorrected malice, till the offence
Has reach'd a fulness we must crush for ever.
Our voice in Argos has sufficient power,
If not to silence thee, at least to punish

Ellec. What have I utter'd more than every hour
Ægisthus boasts? Is not this day of blood
Mark'd out each year for triumph and rejoicing?
What tell I more of Agamemnon's death,
Than these thy annual games aloud to Greece
Before his tomb proclaim?

Æg. I keep my vow :—
 'This is the day that raised me to a throne,
 And 'stablish'd my authority in Argos.
 'Thy mut'nous spirit still resists my power.

Elec. I was not born to bow before *Ægisthus*.

Æg. Not born!—Who then is master of thy fate?
 What voice but mine shall sentence thee? what power
 Stay the swift execution of thy doom?
 I banish thee from Argos. On the day
 Thy foot henceforth infests its soil, thou diest.
 Nor will I leave obedience to thy fears.
 A slave whom I can trust, howe'er far off,
 Shall eall thee wife; or by a looser title
 Command thy person.

Elec. Infamous the thought!
 And worthy of *Ægisthus*.

Æg. Before night,
 Willing or not, thou go'st; therefore be brief
 In preparation. Hence, for a short hour,
 I go. When I return, expeet to hear
 Another, of the race of *Agamemnon*,
 My dearest foe, is made seeure for ever.

Cly. What means that threat? Has thy rage vow'd
 the death
 Of all my children?

Æg. Tell me—seems their death
 A crime of deeper dye than was their father's?

Cly. Oh horrible reproof! and must my soul,
 Trammell'd by thee in guilt, by thee be stung
 With that our mutual act?

Elec. Where'er I go,
 Whate'er my fate, I eannot know or see
 More misery than I leave behind me here.
 Plagues are ye both, and scorpions each to the other.
 Lo, the endearments ye have bought with blood,
 Your confidence of heart and home of peace.
 Such ever come to nuptials so cemented.
 I need not wish you other than you are,
 For your much torment.

Æg. Instantly begone,
 Thou matchless insolence! Where thou art found,
 A source of discord never will be wanting.
 Thou art our bane and torment. Hence! begone:
 Reply not, but begone.

Elec. I go, and gladly. [*Exit, R.*]

Æg. No—never peace nor comfort can come near us

While she remains. Ever upon our ears
Harshly her voice has jarr'd. Sorrow and strife
Have been to us the fruit of her reproaches.
Our grief has been her scorn, our strife her mirth.
'Twas weak in thee to intercede for her

Cly. She is my daughter.

Æg. Weaker still in me
To listen to thee.—More than banishment
Her death had served me.

Cly. Still thy words give notice
Of dreadful thoughts. .Alas ! what would'st thou more ?

Æg. I would be king in Argos. .safely king

Cly. And art thou not, with absolute dominion?—
Of life and death, of property and honour,
Thy voice disposes freely. To thy nod
Obedience runs, swift as the forked bolt
That executes the will of highest Jove.
What more is wanting to thee ?

Æg. Safety—safety.
Not always from the will obedience flows :
The knee may bend, e'en when the heart rebels.
Dark rumours are afloat : secret repinings
Are breathed, that slur my just authority :
And knots of men, in corners met, disperse
O' the sudden from the eye of observation.
Whispers I hear, and faces in the crowd
I see, that please me not. I know Orestes
Has friends in Argos : these cabal together,
And wish me dead. He is the source and fountain
Of every ill that threatens me : he dies,
And their sole band of union is dissever'd.

Cly. He dies ! my son—Orestes dies ! Oh Heaven !
And would'st thou perpetrate a crime so useless?—
Far hence he wanders in obscurity :
Too far to work thee harm. He is my son.
Much have I done,—much bear for thee, *Ægisthus*.
Be this my only guerdon—spare my son.

Æg. And hast thou gone thus far with me in blood
To pluck me back, even now—when my soul grasps
Her full desire?—I go right on—nor pause
To weigh the value of a stripling's head,
That stands between me and security.
To thee the father's death was needful—I
Require the son's.—It is resolved—he dies.

Cly. Not if a mother's arm has power to save.

Æg. One husband found it strong—I fear its power
Is weak for safety.

Cly. Oh, ferocious heart!
 Not fully known till now!—Though deep in guilt
 A fatal passion plunged me, in my breast
 Amid sad wreck some natural feelings live:
 Wake not a mother's fury.

Eg. Well I know
 A husband sleeps not safely by thy side.
 Thyself beware my wrath.—Orestes dies.

[ÆGISTHUS goes out, L.—CLYTEMNESTRA stands
 for a time in agitation—then goes out on the oppo-
 site side, R.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The skirts of a Grove near the Palace of the Pelopidæ. In the midst, the Tomb of Agamemnon. Argos in the distance—not too remote.*

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES down the steps, R. U. E., with an Urn.

Orest. Here is the scene of our great enterprise.
 Days of my childhood, rise not on my soul:
 Awhile ye must give way to sterner thoughts.
 Poor is thy welcome, Pylades, in Argos.
 We come not like undoubted heirs of empire,
 No; nor like men that bear Heaven's awful warrant
 With nature's, to avenge a father's death.
 Methinks it shames my great progenitors,
 Thus, like a spy, in darkness and disguise
 To steal even on a murderer.

Pyl. (L.) Remember,
 No way, but this, the oracle permitted.

Orest. (R.) Oh, let not his escape be possible,
 All righteous Powers! Give empire where you will!
 I welcome any fate that may befall me,
 Let but this hand avenge my father's death.

Pyl. When from the fate-foretelling shrine of Delphos
 Apollo deigns to answer mortal men,
 The sacred voice admits no question—Death
 And ruin follow on the least infraction
 Of his high mandate. When with thee I bow'd
 Within the fane, thus spoke the voice divine:
 'By fraud the deed was done: with fraudulent hand

In secret take thou vengeance of the crime.
'Thy faithful friend alone be thy companion.
Beware : to none disclose thy name or purpose.'

Orest. The solemn sounds seem yet to thrill my ear.

Pyl. But, dear Orestes, in thy zeal not always
Their caution is retain'd.

Orest. 'Tis true, my spirit
Abhors and starts from this dark creeping practice.

Pyl. The hand of fate is on us even now :
And we are destined to achieve this work—
Whether with good or evil to ourselves,
Our strict or loose obedience may determine.
'Twas not a mere chance motion of the billows
That drove us on this shore, when we alone
Of all that climb'd the bark on Crissa's strand
Escaped the fury of the insatiate wave.

Orest. Nor without influence of some power divine,
Amid the wild confusion of the wreck,
Grasp'd I this urn, as to the plank I clung,
When rose the last shriek of the crew ; and suck'd
Within the merciless gurge the ship went down.
The powers that saved me when Ægisthus' son
Came darkly plotting on my life in Phocis,
These from the wreck have saved with me his ashes
Closed in this urn, buoy'd up and floated on
Above the oozy bottoms of the deep,
An omen of destruction to Ægisthus.

Pyl. What surer omen have we than our safety,
When all else perish'd ? Though not even a weapon
Is left to us, do I the more despond ?
'The Gods require not armed multitudes ;
The naked hand is mightier than the sword,
If they accept and bless its ministry.

Orest. They leave me thee, my Pylades : in thee
I have a thousand swords.

Pyl. No more, no more.
Be cautious. For my care, that sole return
I ask thee. Now, indeed, our task begins.

Orest. From this time shall I count each hour of life
Left to Ægisthus as my shame : one wish
Alone burns in me : even at once to enter—
To seek the murderer—to rush upon him—
Though girt by all his guards around—and pierce
His felon bosom with a thousand wounds.

Pyl. This is the feeling that must bear thee through ;
But it must serve, not master thee. Thy fury
Looks out too madly from those flashing eyes

If I but name Ægisthus. In his house
Be thou to him as a consuming fire,
But cover close the dangerous element.
Let nothing seen give warning of his peril.

Orest. Blame me not. Fylades ! Think what I am :
Think where we stand : look there : within those walls
Was my dear father treacherously murder'd.
There have the murderers revell'd for long years,
Exulting in their spoil. Oh ! I am tame,
Base, cowardly, and spiritless.

Pyl. Be patient.

Orest. Why burst I not at once upon the tyrant ?
Why haste I not to rouse up in my favour
The people, by one passionate appeal ?

Pyl. Madness ! what hath the oracle enjoin'd ?
Think'st thou the guilty have no spies ?—Thy head
Were cheaply bought by all the tyrant's treasures :
One word in public utter'd were thy ruin

Orest. I will, I will be wary—I resign
Myself to thee.

Pyl. The tidings of thy death,
Feign'd, to deceive Ægisthus, and this urn,
In which, for his son's ashes, he shall think
Those of Orestes glut his hate, will give
A ready entrance to the tyrant's presence.
When face to face we stand with him, Orestes,
Let me declare our tidings : I shall speak
More calmly than the son of Agamemnon
To that assassin may.

Orest. Even as thou wilt.
So I may quickly act, say what thou wilt.
Only remember this : whate'er may happen,
No arm but mine must touch the murderer's life.
No, not a drop of that devoted blood [*Vehemently*
Will I concede to any he that lives,
Not even to thee—Touch not a hair of him,—
Mine is the victim—mine.—

Pyl. Now, by the powers,
That thus far have conducted us in safety,
I think thou hast resolved to scoff at caution
Here stand we in the very jaws of danger,
Close by the palace, and thou ravest as loudly
As though Ægisthus lay beneath thy sword,
Master'd, and shrinking from the blow. At hand
Is other witness than these cypresses
That wave around. And, lo there ! by my fears,
The women of the house come forth, and bend

'This way their steps. Best stand aside awhile.

[*He takes ORESTES aside, L. U. E.*

Enter ELECTRA, CHRYSOTHEMIS, and two Female Attendants, L., carrying offerings.—ORESTES and PYLADES stand apart behind a tree, L. U. E.

Chry. Is there no hope? may no entreaties move
Ægisthus to repeal his stern decree?

One effort will I make at his return:

Low at his feet in humble suit I'll bow,

And weary him with prayer; nor cease to cling

To his detested knees, till I have won

A kinder fate for thee.

Elec.

Stoop not to him.

Heaven yet may give me safety: but be sure

It will not come with mercy from Ægisthus.

Orest. She names the murderer.

Pyl.

Therefore need we caution.

Elec. Now for the last time to fulfil my vow.

Oh sacred tomb! and thou, dear shade revered!

Who now shall honour you? since far away

A wretched exile I am sent with shame.

Chry. While life is mine, this tomb shall still receive
Its annual honours.

Elec.

This assurance takes

One from my many sorrows. Now return

Thou and thy maidens, since my vow requires

That all alone I make my offerings.

Chry. The Gods forbid thy vow should be infringed!

And, should I stay with thee, I could but take

A formal part in thy sad offices—

My tears would only flow for our near parting.

When all is finish'd here, make haste to join me,

Nor let me of thy little stay in Argos

One moment lose.—My maidens, come with me.

[*Exit CHRYSOTHEMIS and Attendants, L.—*

*While ELECTRA inspects the offerings which
have been laid near the tomb, ORESTES speaks.*

Orest. By heaven, they move me much! What tomb is this,

And who are these that from the palace come,

Complaining of Ægisthus? How my heart

Throbs with emotion!

Pyl.

For a time be patient.

Elec. [At Tomb, R. S. E.] Ye Powers that watch the
living, nor withhold

Your gracious aspect from the shadowy realms.

Where over meads of flowery asphodel,
 And under groves green with immortal spring,
 The shades of mighty heroes walk, and hold
 High converse with congenial spirits—hear
 Your suppliant's prayer ! as with chaste hands I pour
 These pure libations on the earth, and throw
 Fresh herb and flower upon this honour'd tomb—
 Look down, look down upon my father's house,
 Look down on those who now pollute his halls,
 And on the workers of iniquity

[ORESTES *manifests impatience.*

Bring in your own good day the doom they merit.
 If for my mother's erimes, by your award,
 On me must fall increase of misery,
 Still let my life be pure and my hand holy.
 And oh ! where'er Orestes wanders, guard
 His life with special care : pour blessings on him :
 Give him to sit upon his father's throne.
 And fitly to avenge the mighty dead.

Orest. (c.) I can refrain no longer.—Hold me not !

[*Coming forward, c.*

-Orestes then has friends ! But who is she
 That for his safety prays, and joins his name
 With mournful rights ?

Elec. Say rather, who are you,
 That in the garb of strangers thus intrude
 On sacred duties ?

Pyl. (L.) [To ORESTES.] Let me speak. From far
 Strangers we come. Such duties we respect
 And justly venerate thy pious eare.

Orest. (c.) May I not ask whose tomb is this—who
 sleeps

Beneath—to whom thy ministry is given ?

Elec. (R.) Though strangers, ye have heard the name.
 Who has not ?—

Of Agamemnon.

Orest. Oh my soul ! how slow
 Was thy conception ! Have I stood so long
 Before the tomb that guards that sacred head ?
 Down to the earth, dull knees ! Be rooted here,
 While to the honour'd shade my soul, o'erpower'd
 As by his visible presence, bends in awe.

Pyl. Be more thyself.

Orest. Oh, what a trial, this !
 What passions here contend for mastery !

Elec O generous stranger, seldom is this tomb

Approach'd with so much reverence. In Argos
They thrive who most insult it.

Orest. Suddenly

The hour of vengeance comes.

Elec. But who art thou,

That thus art moved?

Orest. And is not this a sight

To move the heart of—

Pyl. Learn from me. The tomb

May well affect the harbingers of death.

We come with tidings that befit the tomb,

And most of all, the tomb of Agamemnon:

But joyful to Ægisthus.

Elec. Fatal sure

The tidings that will glad that cruel heart

Orest. The joy of such not seldom ends in horror.

Pyl. The sad amount of what we bear is this—

That little urn encompasses the ashes

Of him whose life Ægisthus long has sought.

We come from Phocis.

Elec. What! My brother! say

It is not—oh, it is, it is Orestes!

O misery unlook'd for! Die, Electra!

Orest. Oh, Pylades! hast thou a heart, and keepest
Thy purpose, seeing this?

Pyl. [To ELECTRA.] Be comforted.

Elec. Who talks of comfort? Hast thou been
familiar

With contumely? bosom'd every grief

Known to our nature? suffer'd all disgraces

Hard-fronted wickedness can forge? yet kept

Amid the boundless black one little spot,

Where, yet unwither'd, thy heart's pure affections

Might find their fellows, and consort with hope?

Hast thou? and has the whirlwind swept away

Thy paradise, and left a dreary gloom,

Peopled with dæmon forms and shapes of horror?—

Then sit thee down by me, and talk of comfort.

Orest. Can I look on her anguish, and withhold
The word that, spoken, bids it fly?

Pyl. Beware!

Remove that melancholy urn—the sight

Gives food to grief.

Elec. “Oh no! remove it not.

“You seem'd compassionate, howe'er your tidings

“Have struck the heart of my last hope. Oh, cruel!

“ Wouldst thou deprive me of the last poor solace
 “ My heart can know in this most bitter moment * ? ”
 In pity let my trembling hands enfold
 Those dear remains : and let a sister’s tears
 Fall on the urn of him I loved so well.

[*She clasps the urn*

Oh, my dear brother ! did my hand for this
 One victim from the fell *Ægisthus* save ?
 Is it for this that I have fondly dwelt
 On days of smiling infancy, our love,
 Our sports, our little strifes—bewail’d thy absence,
 And wearied Heaven with prayers for thy return !—
 I stand before my father’s tomb—I hold
 My brother’s urn—oh, thou capricious Death !
 Sparest thou alone to strike where thou art wish’d ?
 This morn I thought it much to be a slave :
 Nor dream’d of heavier woe.

Orest. What hast thou said ?

A slave !—Art thou not *Agamemnon*’s daughter ?

Elec. I was—but now *Ægisthus* rules in Argos.
 This urn confirms his savage doom.

Orest. A slave !

Elec. A slave—and doom’d this day to wed a slave !

Orest. Ye Gods, that favour justice ! was this
 wanting

To give the tyrant to a thousand deaths ?

Elec. It helps me not to hear thee call him tyrant
 He triumphs more and more.

Orest. Yet an avenger
 Will come upon the fulness of his joy.

Elec. Vain all—and idle. This poor urn contains
 What was my hope, and should have been my
 vengeance.

Earth has no substitute.

Orest. Behold him here !

Pyl. Madman, forbear !

Orest. No hand but mine—but mine,
 Shall immolate the monster, and avenge
 A father’s death, a sister’s wrongs.

Elec. Oh, Heavens !
 That thought !—oh, no—or else, what means this urn ?

Orest. Horror it means : confusion, and dismay :
 And death it means ; and ruin to *Ægisthus*.

Pyl. He raves, and hears me not.

* The passages marked with inverted commas were omitted in the representation.

Orest. A slave!—Look up,
Much injured daughter of a royal house.
Soon shalt thou change that habit. Thou a slave!
Eternal fires feed on the tyrant's heart,
That dared suggest for thee a servile office.
He lives, that shall maintain and cherish thee
In all the honours due to thy high birth.

Elec. Hope mocks me not—a flood of joy comes
o'er me.

Scarce can I say, thou art—

Orest. I am—Orestes! [*He embraces her.*]

Pyl. Oh, fatal indiscretion! Thou art lost.

[*Thunder*]

Orest. Roll on, ye thunders, till the centre splits!
My heart is blameless. Let the incumbent air
Press down and stifle me, if in my breast
A guilty thought e'er thrived. Nature hath wrung
The secret from my weakness. [*Thunder.*]

Elec. Dear Orestes,
What mystery is this? Why seems the thunder
To intimate to thee the wrath of Heaven?

Orest. Thy wrongs, thy tears, have wrung from me a
secret
Most awfully imposed.

Elec. Is it a crime
To turn thy sister's tears to ecstasies
Of purest joy, and gratitude to Heaven?

Pyl. The Gods commanded secrecy: at Delphos
Was the strict order given.

Elec. Should I then mourn
My brother to his face, deceived by him?

Pyl. 'Tis not for man to fathom Heaven's decrees.
Obedience is our part.

Orest. Alas, Electra!
I fear I know not what. Even while I hold thee
In my embrace, amid the softer workings
Of nature's gentler instincts in my soul,
I feel the fierce and stormy passions rising
Is it the sight of my dear father's tomb?—
Are they a sister's wrongs, that rouse me up
And shake me with a power ne'er felt before?
Or does Heaven's anger visit me already?
Voices I hear, as if they spoke within me,
That summon me to blood. The very air
Is thick with darkening horrors. From the tomb
An awful figure rises.

Elec Dear Orestes,
Look not with such a troubled mind on omens,
That rather should dismay the vile Ægisthus.
The Gods have brought thee to my dearest need,
Th' avenger of thy father's blood : then calm
Thy troubled spirit.

Pyl. Make not that a crime
Which gracious Heav'n as weakness may forgive.
Think what we have to learn and do—how best
We may assail Ægisthus.

Orest. [*Recovering himself at the name.*] Good, as ever,
Thy counsel. [*To ELECTRA.*] Is the murderer within ?

Elec. This morning he went forth, mutt'ring dark
threats.
Short will his absence be : his impious games
This day he celebrates.

Orest. A dire conclusion
This day is destined them. Much, dear Electra,
Would I inquire. Scarce dare I name my mother.

Elec. Avoid her sight till all thy work is safe.
Meanwhile, the tyrant's absence happens well.
Your entrance to the palace is secured
By your feign'd tidings. I will watch for you.
Unknown to all, I keep the fatal sword,
That, in the hand of her I call not mother,
Was aiding in the bloody deed.

Orest. That sword
Well hast thou kept for its peculiar use.
This day it shall be red to the very hilts.

Pyl. But see, along the way, what passengers
Are moving ! Numbers hither bend their steps.
I see amid the columns of the palace
The stir of glancing figures.—Best advance
At once, nor here await the prying eyes
And questions of the curious.

Orest. Let us go.

Elec. And happy be your entrance !

Orest. Oh, ye halls !
Will not your marble floors beneath my feet
With crimson float ? I come, the minister
Of vengeance. May the victim soon be here !

Pyl. Once has the oracle been disregarded.
Henceforth let double caution guard our lips.

Orest. Use any care that may not long put off
The hour when I may take him by the throat,
And say, ' Thus didst thou ; this is thy reward ! '

Exeunt, L.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A principal apartment of the Palace.**Enter* CLYTEMNESTRA, R.

Cly. No, never on this fatal morn's return
Have these tremendous bodings on my soul
Sunk with a weight of such o'erwhelming power.
Come, fearful night ! make haste to scarf me up,
Throng'd as thou art with terrors, from a day
Still more terrific. Sure some dire event
Is near, when guilt would fly from light to darkness.
Hence, ye grim shapes ! what make ye, in the face
Of broad-eyed day ?—Each arched space is peopled
With haggard forms. Upon the teeming walls
Fierce figures from the tapestry nod at me,
And warp their frowning brows o'er glaring eyes,
And threaten to come down. Easy were death,
So from such terrors it were sure escape.
But in the world of shades, the things that here
Are doubtful, or the coinage of our fears,
May hunt us,—terrible realities.
This present mode of being may avail
To blunt to me a spirit's edge of action ;
But if, on putting off this mortal frame,
Their nature I must take, I dare not think
What power they may have o'er me. Better bear
These visits of their mitigated strength,
Than brave their worst, and meet them spirit to spirit.
And must I suffer more ? more than these terrors,
The chief reward this guilty hand hath won ?
Who comes ?—Each sound alarms me.

Enter CHRYSOTHEMIS, L.

Is it thou,
My child ?—approach. Thou dost not war upon me.
In thee, at least, I find a daughter's heart.
Tears are thy sole reproaches. Would that mine
Might flow ! But in my heart a withering power
Has dried the founts of sorrow. Blood might drop
Sooner than tears from these hot throbbing orbs.

Chry. Alas ! I come not now a comforter
Though poor Orestes here was made a theme
For venom'd tongues, and slanderous obloquy
Strove long to rail him from a mother's heart,
Thou didst not wish him dead.

Cly. Dead ! Surely, no !
Thou dost not mean it ?

Chry. 'Tis, alas, too true.

Cly. Oh, savage and remorseless ! is thy threat
So soon, Ægisthus, made an act ! My prayers
Had no avail.

Chry. I did not say Ægisthus
Is guilty of his death.

Cly. Who else is guilty ?
Who but Ægisthus long has wish'd him dead ?
Who else went forth this morning, loud in threats
Against his life ? Who else delights in blood ?
Who else ?—It is none other but Ægisthus.

Chry. Nay, hear me.—Strangers now arrived from
Phocis
The tidings bring.

Cly. Ah ! thou confirm'st him guilty.
Did he not send his son to Phocis, charged
With some dark errand ? Phocis was the scene
Of this foul deed ? Orestes by the hand
Of Myrtilus has fallen.

Chry. 'Tis plain—we all
Shall be his victims. Even this day Electra
Goes to her fate. Though last, mine is not distant.

Cly. What shall I do ? Time was, when I was
prompt,
Too prompt for action. Shall I sit, subdued
By grief and fear, trembling before the power
Myself have made, while fall my children round me ?

Enter Female ATTENDANTS, R., from an inner apartment, some bearing ornaments of dress, &c.

1st Atten. Please you, 'tis now the time we were
commanded
To wait on your attiring. All is ready
Within—your robes and royal ornaments
For the day's festival.

Cly. Away !—thy words
Are grating, out of tone, and harshly jar
With all my thoughts. Keep from my sight all objects
That breathe of aught but sadness and despair.

My festival is with the dead. [*Exeunt ATTENDANTS, R.*]

But hence,

Pernicious sorrow! Let my ancient daring

Once more awake. Ægisthus yet may find

There's danger in the fury of a mother. [*Exeunt, L.*]

SCENE II.—*An inner court of the Palace, having colonnades at the sides, and passages leading to the Baths and various apartments.*

Enter ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, ARCAS, and Attendants, R. U. E.

Arc. Look that these strangers in my absence find
No lack of hospitable care. Make ready
In their apartment. [*Exit Attendant, R.*] 'Tis my special office

To see you well attended. As I guess,
Your tidings will secure you royal welcome
From those who rule here. But, believe me, sirs,
They strike most heavily on my old heart :
And I could wish I had not lived to hear them.

Orest. Dost thou not serve Ægisthus?

Arc. If I do--

Orest. Why then thou hast an ear that drinks all sound
Of death like music.

Arc. Judge not rashly, stranger.—
While one of Agamemnon's race remains,
My station here is needful.

Orest. Thou wast here
When many a plot was framed against Orestes?

Pyl. Why thus injurious? This exceeds our duty.

Arc. Young man, believe there are who serve the
great

In honest limits.—It was my good fortune,
Soon after he began to rule in Argos,
To win the notice of great Agamemnon :
I saw his early deeds, and by his side
Fought in the battles of the Trojan plain.

Orest. Yet thou couldst see him fall!—nay, even thy
aid—

Elec. He was far off.

Arc. Upon the Ægean deep
I rode before a storm, such as last night
Howl'd o'er Arachne's height : the ship that bore
The King of men gain'd first the shore alone.

Elec. That night the deed was done.

Arc. I came to share
 In saving young Orestes. Little thought
 Ægisthus by what hand he was withdrawn.
 I care not now how soon he knows it. Strangers,
 Ye have o'erthrown my life's long-cherish'd hope,
 For which I have endured these bloody walls.

Orest. And did thy hand preserve the child Orestes?
 Thou good and faithful heart! forgive the rudeness
 Of my unmanner'd questions.

Arc. Grief alone
 Possesses me. I have no room for anger. [*Exit, L.*]

Orest. And is that heart alone in Argos loyal?

Elec. Argos holds many that abhor Ægisthus.

Orest. Why comes not that detested?—But the sword!
 The sword! my sister. Sacred is that steel
 To this most righteous deed. O give it me!
 Give it, lest haply the fell murderer come
 Ere I am weapon'd; and with these bare hands
 Perforce I must do justice on him.

Pyl. Hear me!
 Know'st thou not where we are?

Orest. How should I not!
 Is there a block in all these marble walls
 That does not tell me, and recite the purpose
 For which we come? Among these many columns,
 There is not one that bears not written on it
 The accursed deed. Methinks the taint of blood
 Is in the air, as if the sense might feel it.
 I almost fear to ask—where, sister—where—
 Where—tell me—did they fall on him.

[*She points to a door.*] So near!
 Oh, Heaven!

Elec. Within that door—

Orest. [*He goes a few paces towards it, and returns.*]

No—yet—I cannot
 For that I am not nerved. Fear'st thou, my soul,
 To look that way?—Yet can the murderers
 Inhabit here, and with unblinking eyes
 Stare on these walls and guilty avenues,
 Familiar and indifferent to sights
 From which I turn.—You shall be purified,
 Ye unclean chambers! Sister, give the sword,
 That sacrificial sword. Till it has done
 Its office, I am guilty of connivance,
 And read reproach in these defiled walls.

Elec. Your chamber is appointed you: and thither

With caution I'll convey the sword. Beware
 Ægisthus sees it not, until its point
 Is at his breast. He knows it.

Orest. It shall smoke
 In his heart's blood, ere his eyes wink on it.
 Bring it with speed. How long, eternal justice,
 Must my dear father's spirit call for vengeance!
 [*Exeunt, ORESTES and PYLADES, R., ELECTRA, L.*]

SCENE III.—*A public place in Argos, near the Temple
 of Juno Argiva.*

ÆSCHINES and CRATIDAS enter, R., in conversation.

Æs. I rather wonder that our houses stand,
 Than think the mischief of the storm exceeds
 The threats of the night's clamour.

Cra. Is't not strange, that
 The tempest and the lightning should lay flat
 Or shiver all those ancient oaks, that crown'd
 The slope of the Pelopidæ, yet spare
 One slender sapling that among them grew?

Æs. The waters, too, were stirring. Tanus rose
 In fury o'er his banks, and rushing o'er
 The vineyards of Ægisthus, the swollen tide
 Swept off all vestige of his recent altar,
 Raised to the Fates.

Cra. I could grow fanciful,
 And fit these portents with a pithy meaning,
 But that a fear instill'd this very morn
 Chills the quick warmth of my creative thought.

Æs. What is't, I pray?

Cra. You have not heard the news?

Æs. No, none of import.

Cra. Passing the Delphinium
 E'en now, I met with Arcas, who was seeking
 Our good friend Diocles. He shook his head,
 And told me tidings of Orestes' death
 Were brought from Phocis.

Æs. Now the Gods forbid!
 For many a longing eye looks out in Argos
 For his return. Ægisthus will not 'scape
 Some shrewd suspicion.

Cra. He bears more than that.
 Look at the past. He will but laugh at portents,
 If this be true.

Æs. And yet, 'tis said he trembled
This morning in the temple, and turn'd pale.

Cra. He never prays but when strong fear is on him.
What was't that scared him?

Æs. Here comes Eudamippus,
Who saw what pass'd.

Enter EUDAMIPPUS, L. S. E.

Save you, sir!

Euda. Heaven keep you
In this wild season!

Æs. You were in the temple
This morning at the sacrifice. Pray tell us
What pass'd. We hear that formidable omens,
Through all the rites, struck terror in Ægisthus.

Euda. "I am not one that think the Gods are angry
"Whene'er we see a wonder,—only such
"To our gross ignorance. I little care
"Whether a vulture flies to left or right:
"But I confess the swift and strange succession
"Of frightful accidents that came this morning
"Thick on each other in the temple here,
"Has fill'd me up with thoughts of coming evil.
Scarce had Ægisthus, by the priests preceded,
Set foot within the temple, when a swarm
Of shrieking bats issued from the recess:
They pass'd the priests; and, flitting round Ægisthus,
Brush'd with their obscene wings the sacred fillets
He wore for sacrifice: he, shuddering,
Strove to repel them with extended hands;
And in that act his golden coronet
Fell on the marble pavement, and was broken.

Æs. 'Tis strange!

Euda. When, as he stoop'd, as if to gather
The pieces, from his face fell drops of blood
On his own hand.

"*Cra.* And think you this bodes nothing?"

Æs. What follow'd?

Euda. I stood forward, and could see
One of the attendants place upon his head
A chaplet. Would you think it? 'Twas a wreath
Of twisted tamarisk.

Cra. The plant of death,
"To graves devoted!"

Euda. Order was restored:
But when we near'd the altar, on a sudden

The victim bellow'd fearfully ; kick'd down
 The sacred meal ; and, dragg'd by force, resisted.
 Madly he gored the officiating priest :
 And though, o'erpower'd by numbers, to the knife
 His throat he yielded, still he toss'd his head,
 And shook his blood upon the ministers,
 Struggling and groaning till he fell exhausted.

Æs. Most strange !

Euda. O sirs ! the scene was truly frightful.
 Ill omens even to the last attended
 These dismal rites. Forth from the sacred baskets
 Of amaranth and parsley crawl'd a serpent ;
 And on the altar the ineffectual fire
 Left unconsumed the offerings, and went out,
 Black smoke and horrid stench filling the temple.

Æs. Surely the Gods frown on these impious games.

Cra. They must.—Less holy eyes than theirs abhor
 them.

Think you they'll still proceed ?

Euda. Oh yes ! *Ægisthus*
 Thinks his life hangs upon them.

[*The bearers of prizes for the games pass in the
 back-ground, with tripods, vases, large
 brazen shields, &c.*]

See you not ?

They bear the prizes to the forum there,
 To be inspected. Three hours hence is named
 The time for their commencement.

Æs. They'll go heavily

Cra. I like them not.

Æs. Nor I :—nor, to be plain,
 Him who ordain'd them.

[*A body is borne past.*
 See you there !]

All things look black.

[*To one of the passers by.*] I pray you, what has hap-
 pen'd ?

Citizen. The famed Thessalian mares, that won last
 year

The first prize in the race, and should have won
 This year, have kill'd their master.

Euda. 'Twas by chance, sure

Citizen. They ever were most gentle : but this
 morning

They madly fell upon each other,—he
 Essay'd to check them : when on him their rage

They turn'd at once, and wretchedly destroy'd him ;
 Then, bursting forth, like things driven by the Furies,
 They rush'd at full speed o'er the sacred field,
 Up the steep slope, and o'er the precipice
 Dash'd down together.

Æs. Never will I trust
 To omens more, if this day ends like others. [*Exeunt, L.*]

SCENE IV.—*An Apartment of the Palace.*

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA and CRYSOthemis, R.

Cly. He must be guilty. In the wish he was so
 Not first to-day. And now the act has follow'd,
 Whose should it be ?

Chry. Then why afflict thyself
 With this inquiry ? It will cost thee dear
 To see these strangers.

Cly. 'Tis not ratified,
 Though strongly we suspect it, that his death
 Came from Ægisthus—therefore—but they come.

Enter PYLADES and ORESTES, R.

Young are they, and well favour'd. Surely, such
 Are not the looks of murderers. And yet—
 Young men, approach. The sum of your sad tidings
 Hath reach'd me. Let me now be satisfied
 How fell the event that brought you.

Orest. Satisfied !
 We cause no tears—as yet. [*To PYLADES, half apart.*]
Pyl. 'Tis mine to speak.—
 With due respect I answer. We are sent
 By Strophius, king of Phocis, to Ægisthus :
 And what we bear to him must be deliver'd :
 Such are our orders.

Cly. Know you not that I
 With him bear sovereign rule ?

Orest. I know the date
 And origin of your confederate power.

Cly. You wander from my purpose. I would learn
 If aught you know of plots and stratagems
 Contrived for the departed.

Orest. For Orestes ?
Cly [*Mournfully.*] Whom else ?

Orest. Whom else indeed ! To
 none in Greece
 Were they unknown : notorious to the world

As was his father's death, Ægisthus' hatred,
[PYLADES takes his hand.
And Clytemnestra's present life in Argos.

Pyl. Is this thy promise?

Cly. Know'st thou not, young man,
'Thou speakest to the mother of Orestes?

Orest. I know I see—the partner of Ægisthus.

Cly. Hast thou a mother?

Orest. I—I—had a father.

Pyl. He lately lost his father : from that day
At times a moody sullenness comes o'er him,
Or angry flashes burst from his vex'd mind,
That keep no note of time, or place, or person.
I pray you pardon him. I would King Strophius
Had given me a discreeter colleague !

Orest. Wherefore
Comes not Ægisthus, that I may perform
The thing for which I came?

Pyl. [*Aside.*] Again! thou false one!
[*Aloud.*] Respect a mother's sorrows.

Cly. He speaks harshly ;
Yet is there something in his voice and look
That moves me strangely.

Orest. If I have offended,
'Tis from an error that may be forgiven.
I know Ægisthus sought Orestes' life :
And the world thinks he had some cause to fear him.
It was thy wish to reign, and with Ægisthus.
Orestes could not live, and leave to thee
Thy wish. Ægisthus sits upon the throne
From which Orestes would have hurl'd him down,
And in his blood wash'd his avenging hands.
He dies ; and thou from his upbraiding eyes
Must think thee safe. And thy Ægisthus lives.

Cly. Oh, tell me! trifle not thus with my grief
How died my son? Fell he by murderous hands?
Oft hast thou named Ægisthus.

Orest. Every plot
Succeeds not: and, belike, the Gods made not
That death hereditary in his house.

[*Looking fully at her.*

—Ægisthus is not guilty of *his* blood.

Pyl. Let me, but in few words, relate the event.
At Delphos in the games, by fatal chance,
Even as he turn'd the goal, and victory
Appear'd secure, his chariot struck the pillar,

And dash'd he fell with violence to the plain.
Further I will not rend a mother's heart.
Please you, we may retire.

Cly. Oh, dear Orestes !
If e'er the shades of the departed learn
The grief of those who mourn them, know how dearly
Thy mother weeps o'er thy untimely fate.

Orest. Then, was Orestes dear to thee ?

Cly. One feeling
Is ne'er extinguish'd in a mother's heart ?

Orest. And have I touch'd a mother's heart ?

Pyl. 'Tis time
We should retire.—What must I force thee hence ?
[*Exeunt, R.*

SCENE V.—*The entrance of the Palace.* ÆGISTHUS
*enters hastily with ADRASTUS. He has on his head the
slender fillets worn in the morning's sacrifice, and a
green chaplet. He looks back.*

Æg. Be ready with my chariot, at the time
Appointed for the games. Be punctual.
Adrastus ! let the guards be doubled here,
And at the stadium. Have a watchful eye
And a quick ear, and make me full report.

[*Exit ADRASTUS, L.*

[*He comes forward.*

Would that the day were past ! It seems mark'd out
For terrible events. Omens on omens
Come thickening : frightful all, and terrible.
They dog me home even to my palace steps.
Nor give a moment's respite to my fears.
The threat'ning gloom of Heaven appears reflected
Upon me from men's faces. None smile on me.
No cheerful salutations greet my wheels.
No eye meets mine in gladness : to the Gods
None call for blessings on me. Where I come,
All men break off discourse, as though each tongue
Were busy with my life—with mine :—their whispers,
And, better still, their shifting eyes, confess it.
—Were but Orestes dead, I could despise
Much that now holds me in alarm : for then
The disaffected had no monument
Whereon to hang their hopes of my destruction.
—No tidings yet from Myrtilus ! The time
Is past, though certain was his information
Where he might strike his quarry. Nor did ever

More desperate or remorseless hearts set forth
 For bloody hire, than went with Myrtilus.
 —I will not think Orestes could escape them.
 Yet heavily these omens weigh upon me.
 Until I know him dead, I must restrain
 Awhile my will ; give colour to my acts ;
 And mark off one by one, and cautiously,
 The objects of my hate.

Enter ARCAS, R., *behind* ÆGISTHUS.

Who's there ! who comes
 Stealthily on my private thoughts ? Is't thou,
 Arcas ? Whence comest thou ?

Arc.

From the city.

Æg.

Well !

What is their talk there ?

Arc.

I took with me tidings

That made me dull to all the city's babble.

Æg. What are thy tidings ?

Arc.

Has no flattering tongue

Yet borne the grateful rumour to thine ear ?—

Orestes' death is told by men from Phocis.

Æg. Oh joy ! Orestes dead !—Then I indeed

Am king in Argos. Ne'er till now the crown

Was mine ; but now I feel the golden round

Sit proudly on my brow. Orestes crowns me.

*[Putting his hand to his head, he feels the chaplet,
 and takes it off.]*

What's this ! Oh, horror !—By the dead such crowns

Are worn. It is the fatal tamarisk ;

And I this morn have worn it, and so long

Have been mark'd out for death. Orestes dead !

Arcas, thou liest : it is some hideous plot.

I'll have thee rack'd till I come at the truth.

Am I betray'd ? Thou changest not. It may be

Some stratagem of Clytemnestra's dotage,

Contrived to save her son. Let her not hope

To blind Ægisthus by such weak inventions.

Leave not the palace, on thy life. Follow me

Instantly. I'll confute this shallow woman ;

Confront thee with her, and detect the author

And all abettors of this shrewd device.

Look not for pardon, if thou sharest in it.

[Exit, R., followed by ARCAS.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The side of a public way leading to ARGOS, near a Villa. DAULIAS is standing near a tree torn up by the roots, at which he has been cutting. The landscape exhibits marks of a late storm, in riven branches of trees, swollen brooks, &c.*

Dau. These masters have no conscience. I have saved
Some score of sheep, that struggled in the flood,
And risk'd my life—if I, indeed, by water
Am mortal—all to save an old pied ox.
And now, when all the country round is flocking
To Argos, to the games, Daulias forsooth
Must find his pastime here, and chop away
For the next winter's firing. Gratitude!
Thou art a name. What had this tree to do
To fall? Unless, indeed, my master's pate
Had stood within the sweep of its descent.
—My old wild life had relish of some pleasure;
And, when the fear of the law's arm was off us,
We were a jovial band. Hard work, and pot-herbs,
Is not a change to boast of, my friend Daulias.
Here comes another—for the games, I warrant!
And yet, methinks, that does not seem the gait
Of one that follows pleasure. Weary is he,
And wears no garment that speaks holiday.

Enter LYCUS, L.—crosses to R.

Sure I should know that face. Can it be Lycus?

Ly. What, fellow Daulias!

Dau.

Well met, fellow Lycus.
Yet not too well met; since I guess, that neither
Can do much service to the other's need.

Ly. What! thy new calling answers not?

Dau.

Thy old one
Seems to have used thee scurvily enough.
But tell me, whither thou art bound, and whence
Thou com'st, so weather-beaten and forlorn?

Ly. Perk up thy ears, and listen. I am bound
For high preferment.

Dau.

Thou hast been so long,
And wilt achieve it, or the cross in Argos
Will ne'er be lifted for a thief.

Ly. Leave fooling,
And listen.—Here I stand, the simple Lycus,
And bear with me the destiny of kings.

Dau. The Fates have found a goodly carrier, truly !

Ly. Pr'ythee, no more ; but list in sober sadness.
Thou know'st our last achievement at Mycenæ
Gave us a fame too brilliant for our safety,
And we dispersed. The mighty ones that hang us
Need us at times. Even he that rules in Argos
Found Lycus might be useful. In a word,
Myself and three bold spirits went to Phocis
With Myrtilus, to take off young Orestes.
We came ; watch'd all his movements ; and contrived
To fall upon him, when, with Pylades,
Son of King Strophius, far from their attendants,
He follow'd, in a narrow vale, the chase.
Though they were arm'd to war on the fierce boars,
Our numbers, five against the two, gave promise
Of easy work ; and fatally we slack'd
Our caution, waiting not to take them singly.
I never saw such men. In the first onset
Two of our party were struck dead. Orestes
Then closed with Myrtilus, and threw him down,
Nor quitted him till breath had left his foe ;
While Pylades engaged me and the others.
In brief, my comrade fell ; and I was fain,
Deep gash'd and master'd, to cry out for mercy.

Dau. They spared thee !

Ly. On condition that I made
Full opening of our plot. With their hounds' leashes
They bound my hands : their horns call'd their attendants.

In short, I found a prison ; but was guarded
So loosely after some few days—perchance
They thought my wounds would hold me,—that I'scaped.
And I am here with tidings for Ægisthus,
On which, it may be, hangs his very life.
I know Orestes now is on his way
With Pylades from Phocis—and their aim
Is deadly to Ægisthus. They bear with them
The ashes of his son.

Dau. Say'st thou ? the ashes ?

Ly. The ashes, in an urn.

Dau. Good ! Two of them
Both young ?

Ly. Two and both young. But why these questions?

Dau. Simply that I may tell thee this—thy men
Are here before thee. Thou hast need be swift,
If thou wouldst warn Ægisthus of their coming
Ere mischief happens.

Ly. How shouldst thou learn this?
Thou think'st to fright me, Dauias; but I know thee.

Dau. Attend and judge.—Three hours are pass'd, or
more,
Since, as I brought some sheep up from the flood,
Two youthful strangers met me, and inquired
How far the house of the Pelopidæ
Stood hence, and if Ægisthus now were there.
One of them bore an urn.

Ly. But is this true?

Dau. Ay, by mine honesty.

Ly. Thine honesty!

Dau. By our old fellowship.

Ly. Now I believe thee:
We have our faith. I will but stay to tell thee
It may be I shall do Ægisthus service,
Nay, save his life. If greatness is put on me,
I'll show thee countenance, and interpose,
As far as may consist with reputation,
My hand between thee and the laws' correction.
Farewell.

Dau. We part not so. I may point out
My strangers. I'll along with thee: my master
At worst can only send me to the mill.
Lie there, good axe. I'll hazard losing thee.
A fair event will cover all.

Ly. Come on, then. [*Exeunt, R.*]

SCENE II.—A State apartment of the Palace.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, and ADRASTUS discovered.

Æg. It may be thou believest him dead: my doubts
From thy belief receive poor satisfaction.
I must have surer. [*To ADRASTUS.*] Bring those men be-
fore me!

Look to their arms; and let a guard attend.

[*Exit ADRASTUS, L*]

Cly. Now will that cruel heart be satisfied;
Now, freed from the prime object of its fears,
Will cease to tremble at Orestes' name.

Æg. Hadst thou no cause to tremble at his name?

Cly. I had, indeed. But still I was his mother.
Though long I have consorted with *Ægisthus*,
Nature has not abandon'd utterly
My miserable breast.

Æg. Hast thou not fear'd—
I know thou hast—the terrible prediction
That told, *Orestes* should destroy his mother?

Cly. Deliverance from that fear is purchased dearly.
I now could pray it might be possible,
So he were safe.

Æg. [*Sarcastically.*] This new maternal feeling
Excites my wonder. When thou knew'st him living
I heard not of it.

Cly. Wisely it was silent.
The common language of a mother's love
Had waked new fear in thy suspicious soul,
And edged anew thy malice. Not a friend,
'Though 'twere a mother, could thy hate allow him.

Æg. If he indeed be dead, I'll bear invective.

Enter ADRASTUS, L.

Ad. The strangers now attend

Cly. I shall retire.

Æg. Not so—remain.

Cly. And wherefore should I stay?
Canst thou not satiate that remorseless heart
With joy, to me so horrible, but I
In grief must witness thee?

Æg. My doubts require
Thy presence.—Is a guard there?—Let them enter.

[*ADRASTUS goes to the side of the scene, L.*]

Enter ORESTES, PYLADES, ARCAS, and Guards, L.—
ARCAS carries the urn of ORESTES

Strangers, approach.

Cly. Alas, that fatal urn!

Pyl. Ruler of Argos! wherefore are we led
More like offenders than the messengers
Sent by a king? It is not thus in Phocis
That we respect a herald's dignity.

Æg. I do rule Argos.—And no will but mine
May give a form to your reception here.
If ye be heralds, wherefore come ye not
Duly appointed?

Pyl. We have suffer'd shipwreck.

Æg. The time is dangerous ; and evil omens
Bid us be cautious.

Orest. What the Gods ordain
Will come, through all the muniments of fear.

Æg. So !—Ye are Phocians, then ?

Pyl. We come from Phocis,
By Strophius charged to bear to thee this urn.

Orest. It holds what should be dear to thee.

Pyl. We bring
All that is now remaining of Orestes.

Cly. Oh, cruel sight !

Æg. Oh, welcome spectacle !—
Proofs have ye of your mission ?

Orest. Yes.

Æg. What ?

Orest. Lo,
The ring of Agamemnon ! He received it,
A nuptial present, on the very day
That bless'd him with the hand of Clytemnestra.
Thine eye [*To CLYTEMNESTRA*] must know it well.

Nay, look on it.

Cly. Remove it : take it hence.

Æg. Let me behold it.

Orest. Orestes wore this ring : it came with him,
When first, an infant, he was brought to Strophius
For his protection.

Æg. Thou remind'st me well.
How can I reconcile the present mission
From Strophius with the past ? He greets me now
With tidings of the death of him I hated ;
Even of him whom, in his realm, he saved
And nursed, to my discomfort.

Orest. Every heart
Feels not alike. No : all men cannot hate
Or fear a child.

Æg. How !

Pyl. [*Preventing ORESTES.*] Could a king refuse
Shelter and safety to a helpless child.
Thrown on his mercy ? With no hostile purpose
Towards *Ægisthus* he was saved in Phocis.
With *Pylades*, the king's son, he was nurtured ;
And such a friendship grew between the youths
As was the common wonder. But one soul
They seem'd to have, and never were apart.

Æg. Why are they separated now ? Methinks
'Tis pity that urn holds not their blent ashes

But, singly furnish'd as it is, it comes
A prize that not a kingdom's wealth should ransom,
To be inform'd with life. Let these hands grasp it.

[*ORESTES takes the urn from the Guard, and places it in the hand of ÆGISTHUS.*]

Orest. It properly belongs to thee.

Æg.

Ye omens,

That have pour'd on me in such thick succession,
Like lightning's awful flashes, that amaze
The path of the night-lated traveller,
And give him glimpses that affright, not aid him,
When he has chanced on chasm or precipice—
Henceforth be all like this! Upon Ægisthus
Now and for ever, O ye Deities,
That deal out fate to man! make good this omen,
Accepted as the pledge of your high will.

Orest. Hear this, ye Destinies! and in approval
Shake your dread brows.

Æg.

Be jocund, oh my soul!

And walk in air, and cast off carping fear,
That still hath push'd between me and content
The thoughts of him whom this small urn secures.
Henceforth I'll entertain a sov'reign spirit,
With Doubt that looks two ways shake hands for ever,
And be unquestion'd lord of my intent.

Cly. Far from his native home, a wandering outcast,
He fell. Strange faces look'd upon his death.
No mother's hand—Alas! could mine have closed
His dying eyes, he with his last dim look
Had seen their stains, and push'd me back in horror.
Oh my poor child! unhappy was thy lot,
E'en from thy birth.

Orest.

He was indeed unhappy

In what was nearest to him: but in Phocis
The Gods, by Pylades, made large amends.

Cly. When ye return, bear from a wretched mother
Her thanks to Pylades.

Orest.

That friend was all

The Gods in mercy gave for his great losses;
A father and a throne both taken from him.

Æg. What do I hear! Is this a friendly message?

Pyl. Domestic miseries have sour'd his temper.

Oft hath he cross'd me by his peevishness,
Though warn'd. I shall report to Strophius
How ill he has conform'd to his instructions.

Rash one! [*To ORESTES.*] Be sure severe reproof
awaits thee.

Æg. The gift ye bring pleads for his pardon ; else—

Pyl. May Heaven so crown thy wishes, that each foe
May be even as Orestes !

Æg. [*As considering.*] Much I marvel
His death was known to Strophius ere to me.
I had an eye upon him : and my hand
Had reach'd him soon, e'en by the side of Strophius.

Orest. Who knows not, that a thousand limed snares
Were set to take him ? That, where'er thy gold
Could hire a murderer, he was beset ?
The secret knife is safer than the chance
Of equal battle. What the father found,
The son might well expect. But well he knew thee ;
And that sufficed.

Æg. Oh, monstrous insolence !
These words to me, in Argos ! What art thou,
That I should render an account to thee,
And for a miscreant's life ?

Orest. [*With increasing rage.*] A miscreant !
Hear this, ye terrible ne'er-slumbering Gods,
That hoard your bolts for the usurper's head !
A miscreant !

Æg. Ho ! what treachery is here ?

Pyl. Ægisthus, hear me. [*To ORESTES.*] Madman !

Orest. [*Still more vehemently.*] Treachery !
What fear the treacherous but treachery ?
And they fear ever. E'en now, in that urn
Thou think'st thou hast the ashes of Orestes ;
And still his very name strikes thee with fear .
And wakes an ague in thy trembling joints.

Æg. Fear ! fear !—am I not safe ?

Orest. Thou hast no surety
To match thy consciousness. Amid thy guards,
And with that urn before thy feet, thou'rt pale
If I approach, and holla in thine ear,
Orestes !

Æg. [*Shuddering.*] 'Tis a name I loathe.—Have I
The power of life and death, and with a sign
Sweep thee to ruin, yet endure to hear
Such things a moment ?—Answer me, thou slave !—
If thou wouldst ransom from its imminent peril
Thy life, be prompt in answer, and be true.—
First, for thy name ?

Orest. My name——

Pyl. Is Pylades. [*Crosses to ÆGISTHUS.*
And in that name I give the clue that threads
Each doubling turn of these perplexities.

Æg. Can this be true? [*As to himself.*]

Pyl. Why should it not? thou knowest
The love he bore Orestes. He at Delphos
Perform'd the last sad office for his friend,
And brought that urn bathed with his tears to Phocis.
And when his father, seeking to renew
His ancient league with Argos, had resolved
To send to thee this pledge of his desire,
The youth with earnest importunities,
Wrung from his sire a cold and slow consent
That he, his name and rank unknown, might bear
The loved remains to Argos—to the last
Clinging to him, he never left in life.

Æg. That urn is large enough for both,—their ashes
May mingle in't; or to the scattering winds
Thrown out together, on the earth be spread,
Trampled by every baser heel in Argos.

Cly. And do I see the friend of poor Orestes?
Blest shouldst thou be, if on thy head my prayers
Could draw down happiness.

Æg. [*After consideration.*] This one deceit—
Is it alone? [*PYLADES takes the hand of ORESTES*

Orest. [*Aside.*] Oh friend unparagon'd!
And are thy days in jeopardy by me?

Æg. Are they by Strophius sent, or do tney come
With some fell purpose?—Is that urn a fraud
Upon my dearest hopes?

Cly. Is there a hope
Orestes is not dead?

Æg. By heavens! that word
Shows one may think it possible. The ring—
The ring was Agamemnon's—Ah! that thought
Has stirr'd my inmost soul. Their looks give strength
To my suspicion. Such a rage as that
Springs not from friendship only: and the other
Confused and faltering stands.

Enter LYCUS and DAULIUS.

Ly. Look to thyself,
O king of Argos! Thy most deadly foe
Is in thy palace.

Æg. In a pregnant hour
Thy warning comes.

Pyl. He here!

Orest. Oh Pylades.

Æg. There, there he stands.—His name? His name?

Ly. Orestes.

Cly. Oh powers of mercy!

Æg. 'Twas an instinct, then,

That made me shudder as I look'd upon him.

Ly. Orestes this—the other—

Orest. Silence, slave!

'Tis not for such as thou to interfere

With our high destinies. Thy life was spared

Unwisely. [*To ÆGISTHUS.*] Murderer! Since thou
know'st Orestes,

Be sure he can be none but Pylades.

Pyl. Hither I came to aid his just revenge;

Nor grieve to share his fate.

Æg. Be sure thou shalt,

Vile partner of his fraud!

Cly. My son, my son!

But oh what danger! Let a mother's arms

Enfold thee.

Orest. [*Repelling her.*] I am Agamemnon's son.

Cly. O keen reproach! Intolerably just!

Orest. [*To ÆGISTHUS.*] For thee, thou miscreant, foul
with every crime,

Rank with all lecherous and bloody thoughts,—

Cowardly murderer! most adulterous beast!

Why dost thou pause? Am I not in thy power?

Even so my look strikes terror in thy soul.

But oh! I breathe, and yet thou livest. Oh rage!

So near the end to fail! What bitterness

Is in the thought, that any hand but mine

Must deal the vengeance that, be sure, awaits thee!

Æg. The present hour is mine: but yours, nor present,
Nor future aids, ye disappointed traitors.

Enter ELECTRA, L.

Your latest hour is come.

Elec. Alas! my brother!

Have I bewail'd thee absent till this day,

And now must wish thee absent still? I lose thee

Ere yet well found.

Orest. 'Tis so.

Cly. Hear me, Ægisthus!

Some influence once I had: thou much o'er me

Hast exercised for ill. Let me for once

Persuade thy soul to mercy. Save my son!

He may be guarded, and yet live.

Æg. Mere madness
To wish him life. Hast thou forgot the voice
That said, Orestes shall destroy his mother?

Cly. So he be saved, I care not. Let him plunge
A dagger in my heart, and live.

Orest. [*Shuddering.*] No, not by me
Her death is possible. Whate'er her crimes,
My soul respects the inviolable name
Of mother.

Æg. Though he breathed the spongy air
Of a dark dungeon, down a thousand steps,
Where toads engender, and the filthy track
Of slimy reptiles glitters on the walls,
To the pale lamp by which the jailer brings
A starving sustenance,—that would not glut
The sacred thirst his blood alone can quiet.

Orest. Oh for a sword! That I might immolate
The monster 'mid his guards. Will no one lend
A righteous weapon?

Æg. Desperate fool!—'Twas well
My foresight let them not approach with arms.
Henceforth I fear no portents: they are calls
Upon our prudence, on the approach of danger,
And may preserve us.

Orest. Art thou saved awhile,
Tyrant? it is for lengthen'd punishment.
The death my rage had given thee were too sudden,
Too short of torment for a life like thine.

Æg. Vile thing, about to be swept from the earth!
'Talk'st thou of punishment?

Cly. Help me, Electra
To plead to this obdurate for thy brother.

Elec. How shall I sue? My spirit never yet
Bow'd to Ægisthus. For thy sake, dear brother,
I will forget awhile whose child I am.
Behold, Ægisthus, at thy feet I kneel;
I am subdued.

Orest. Rise up! Kneel not for worlds.
Methinks our father's spirit should appear,
And snatch thee from the ground in wrath. Oh never
Give thou so base a thing the triumph o'er us,
To see the race of Agamemnon stoop.
Even life were hateful, if a boon from him;
Show him thy scorn.

Cly. Spare him, Ægisthus! spare him!
And call once more this grateful heart thy own.

Æg. Thou sett'st the jewel at too high a price.
It shall be mine more cheaply, or I'll none on't.

Orest. Base answer to a speech more base.

Cly. My son!
The pangs with which I won thee at thy birth
Were light to what I suffer now.

Orest. I had
A mother once: but she renounced that name.

Cly. Witness these tears, if I renounce the feeling.

Æg. This flower of filial duty scorns his mother.
Plead thou no more. 'Tis fix'd—they perish both.
Would Myrtilus were here! in nothing more
My son than in the hate he bears Orestes.
Joy were it to him to behold his death,—
Much joy. Would he were here!

Orest. Thou hast thy wish.
Behold him there!—that urn.

Æg. Tha urn!

Orest. Contains
His ashes.

Æg. Ye infernal powers!—But no!
No, no. It cannot be. Impudent liar!
This is a fetch of thy inventive malice,
To sting me in the moment of thy death.
I—laugh at thy device. [*With half-choked utterance*

Orest. [*To Lycus.*] Fellow, stand forth.
At least in this thy presence does me service.
I spared thy life. For my sole recompense
Tell thy base hirer—him there—where and how
It was, and whom I slew; and whom thou sawest
Stretch'd on his back, and grinning in the sun.

Æg. Speak, villain! 'Tis not true.

Lyc. It is too true.
He vanquish'd Myrtilus.

Cly. There is no hope
Of mercy.

Elec. None.

Pyl. We smile at death.

Æg. Where am I!
A thousand scorpions in my heart are lodged,
And I am giddy with conflicting horrors.
Do the Fates mock my hopes, and, for revenge,
Give me this dismal urn? My cup of joy
Is dash'd with gall, and brew'd with bitter tears.
But wherefore live these, while before me lies
This mournful object to reprove my slowness?

Adrastus, bear them forth to death—a death
That vilest malefactors die. Thy head
Shall answer for them.

Orest. Death has far less horror
Than thy detested presence. Bear me hence,
Ere my heart bursts with rage.

Cly. Hear me.

Æg. Away!

If at my feet the congregated powers
Of heaven could kneel, yet leave my will its freedom,
They should not add to their condemned span
A single hour. Am I obey'd, Adrastus?

Orest. Remember me; and die a thousand deaths
By fears from which my death will not release thee.

Elec. Alas, my brother!

Cly. Oh, my son!

Æg. Away!

[*Exeunt ORESTES and PYLADES guarded, L.—the
rest, R.*]

ACT V

“SCENE I.—*The Tomb of Agamemnon. The sky is
“overcast. Low thunder is heard, then strange music*

“NEMESIS.—*The Furies.*

“*Nem.* Since the guilty deed was done
“Many a year its round hath run.
“More than ever, now secure
“The murd’rer thinks his triumph sure.
“Now on his exulting hour
“Burst we with tremendous pow’r,
“And at once upon his soul
“The storm of all our tortures roll.

“SEMICHORUS OF FURIES.

“Prepare, prepare, prepare!
“All is ready—He shall bleed
“By the sword that did the deed.

“On the threshold—at the door

“Opening on the bloody floor.

“SEMICHORUS, *answering*.

“Prepare, prepare, prepare !

“After years in ambush past,

“Spring we on our prey at last.

“CHORUS OF FURIES.

“Prepare, prepare, prepare !

“After years in ambush past,

“Spring we on our prey at last

“Rushing with resistless force,

“Now we take our fatal course.

“*[They disappear.]*”

SCENE II.—*The front of the Palace, without the Propylæum.*

Enter ELECTRA and CHRYSOTHEMIS, R

Elec. That way they went upon their fatal errand.

Chry. And must he die ! So brave, and yet so young !

I dare not hope. Oh, brother ! though these eyes

Ne’er, till this fatal morn, beheld thy face,

Even from my heedless infancy—my tears

Flow not less freely. I have loved thee ever.

Elec. His bearing justified my dearest wishes,

And proved him worthy to avenge his father.

The keener is my anguish. Little hope—

Chry. Alas ! what hope, my sister ? What can save them,

Led out unarm’d to suffer ?

Elec.

Fear, indeed,

Sits on my quailing heart—and yet young Hope,

Despight his withering influence, will spring up,

And whisper to my fluctuating soul,

Faintly, there is a chance. Arcos is brave,

And wise as brave : and what he undertakes

Must wear some show of promise.

Chry.

What can one ?

Elec. He talk’d of friends, companions in the battles

Fought for our father, that abhor Ægisthus :

And told me the appearance of Orestes

In Argos were sure signal of revolt
Against the tyrant.

Chry. He spoke confidently,
To keep us from despair.

Elec. It may be so.
But the Gods rule us : Nature holds her course :
The sun is in the heavens : and things of night
Fly his discovering beams. Eternal Themis !
Thou on thy pure throne sittest still on high,
And yet the earth is cumber'd with this monster.

Chry. My grief so blinds me, that I see but dimly.
Dear sister, look if aught thou canst discern
Of movement near the city.

Elec. I descry
Afar off figures, as of men in haste,
That to a centre move.

Chry. Let us ascend
That higher ground : our view will thence be clearer.

Elec. Give me thy hand.

Chry. My heart beats fearfully.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A principal apartment of the Palace*
CLYTEMNESTRA thrown on a seat, back in the scene
ÆGISTHUS forward, near the side, listening.

Æg. Heavily hang the moments, till my ear
Is gladden'd by the footstep of Adrastus.
So slow an executor of my will,
So dull I never knew him. On the rack
I lie, until I know they are despatch'd.
They should have died i' th' palace, but that so
Their death had been less infamous ; and I
Had lost the highest zest of my revenge.

Cly. Oh, savage heart ! implacable by blood !
And is it not enough that he must die,
But thou must pour out in a mother's hearing
These horrid breathings of no human spirit ?

Æg. Peace ! Thou disturb'st me. I would have the
air
So still, that I might list my own heart's motion.
All senses I would have absorb'd in one,
And make my ear the centre of perception.—
Dost thou not hear a step ?

Cly. I hear a voice,

That cries within me: the dread utterance
 Of my heart, sounding to the touch of power:
 And clearly I translate the tremulous tone.
 We are not safe, Ægisthus; nor can be,
 By ways like thine. Thy remedy for danger
 Heaps up the evil, that, like gather'd snow
 Piled on the brow of huge Olympus, falls
 The heavier for delay.—Thy last attempt
 Cost thee a son. Alas, for mine!—There are
 Powers, that, on bloody deeds, requital send.
 Witness my torments, borne even from the day
 We met in guilt.

Æg. [*Going up to her.*] Thy temporising mind,
 Aye hovering between the will and deed.
 Is all our peril's cause. 'Thou wouldst be safe.
 Yet fear'at the means of safety.

Cly. Had I fear'd
 Sufficiently, this hand were free from blood,
 And I in peace.

Æg. Security is peace:
 Ne'er by half-measures won. But half an act
 Was done by us, when Agamemnon fell:
 And thou wouldst have the fruit of perfect action

Cly. And wouldst thou double on my soul the load,
 Beneath whose weight I groan?

Æg. Hast thou forgotten
 With what deep oaths our compact was made fast?
 Hast thou forgotten with what resolute grasp
 Thy will embraced my fortunes, purposes,
 And destiny? Didst thou not swear to stand
 Fast by my side through all impediments,
 And make all means for my advancement lawful?

Cly. I knew thee not: and so was, by thy cunning
 And my strong passions, miserably blinded
 And I have made a covenant with guilt,
 And sold myself to everlasting woe.
 Thine I have made myself, and our joint acts
 Forbid me to believe we shall be sever'd,
 When we are dealt with by the powers that fix
 The doom of our imperishable natures.—
 Yet from thy bloody lessons I have turn'd.

Æg. The first found thee a willing scholar.—Hark!
 I hear the tread of feet.—He comes, he comes!
 Exult, my soul, and feed on thy revenge!

Enter CHRYSOTHEMIS, L.

How ! not Adrastus ! Hast thou seen him ?

Chry.

No.

But, looking to the city, I could see
The road all throng'd with men, and hear the sound
Of some great stir. And one this way is running
In haste, yet halting in his course at times,
As if for lack of breath or strength. Electra
Waits for his tidings.

Æg.

Let her not detain him

A moment from my presence. [*Exit* CHRYSOTHEMIS, L.]

What is this ?

Commotion in the city !—'Tis the time,—
Nay, past the time, appointed for the games ;
And he who comes, perchance, is sent to tell me
The judges wait our presence to commence
The ushering pomp.

[*To* CLYTEMNESTRA.] Wilt thou go forth with me ?

Cly. Go forth ! What ! meet the cruel messenger,
Perchance the executioner, yet fresh
From my son's death, and of his blood unwash'd ?
And wilt thou go ? a father ! Has that urn
Pass'd from thy thoughts so soon ?

Æg.

Ah ! thou hast waked

The slumbering horrors of my soul. Who comes ?

Enter LYCUS, L., wounded, with an Attendant.

And in such ghastly plight ! What, thou !—Good fellow,
What may this mean ? Who gave those wounds ?

Ly.

Orestes

I scarce have strength——

Æg.

Hear I aright ?

Ly.

Orestes.

Æg. Orestes ! art'n'd !—

Cly.

Oh heaven ! my son then lives !

Ly. Thy soldiers fall before him. Some of them
Fight on his side. The city is in arms.

Æg. Curse on my folly, that permitted him
Alive to leave the palace ! Who are with him ?
What numbers ?—Tell me how—

Ly.

Adrastus brought him,

With Pylades, close guarded, to the place
Intended for their death. The way was fill'd
With festive throngs—

Æg.

Oh madness In my rage

This was forgotten.

Ly. Gathering round they came ;
 When suddenly rush'd Arcas through the crowd.
 To arm Orestes with a sword, and strike
 Adrastus down, was but a moment's work.
 " People of Argos !" then aloud he cried,
 " And you, my old companions in the field !
 Behold Orestes !—See your lawful king."

Æg. Ah ! Traitor !

Ly. " Who for Agamemnon's son
 With me will stand ?" At once a thousand voices
 Shouted his name, and down the way the cry
 Roll'd on, " Orestes live ! long live Orestes !"

Æg. Vile changelings ! all is lost !

Ly. The suddenness,
 And their commander's loss, amazed the guards ;
 Yet part are steady to thy cause. Myself
 Essay'd to strike Orestes, but his arm
 Again was powerful on me, and I fled
 To warn thee of thy danger.

Æg. What resource
 Is left ? or whither shall I turn me ?

Ly. Promptness
 And resolution only now can save thee.
 Collect thy guards, yet left within the palace,
 And sally forth, or ere the insurrection
 Has spread through all the city.—I am faint,—
 I bleed apace.

Æg. Tend him. [*Exeunt LYCUS and Attendant, L.*
 Rouse up, my soul !

Be sudden.—Now one only course is left.
 [*To CLY.*] Remember thy strong oaths !—Now,
 Myrtilus,

I come to join thee, or avenge thy death.

Cly. A moment hear me.

Æg. On a moment hangs
 My life.

Cly. Orestes lives.

Æg. To my great danger.

Cly. Thou art not guilty of his blood. His mother
 May plead for thee.

Æg. Plead rather for thyself.

I go.

Cly. To certain death.—Hear me, Ægisthus !

[*Holding him.*
Eg. What ! Traitress ! thou wouldst bargain for
 thy life,

And give me unresisting to his hands,
The purchase of thy safety ! Hark ! the uproar
Approaches. Hold me not :—I will not fall
Into his hands alive. My guards ! my guards ! [*Exit, L.*

Chry. I, too, would stay him, lest his desperate rage
Should harm Orestes. How has he deserved
Thy wish to save him ?

Cly. This is not a time
To tell how all the guilt I have incurr'd
Binds me the faster to him. Hark ! again,
And louder—louder !—'Tis a terrible
And fatal hour.

Chry. Ye Gods ! the event is yours." [*Exit, R.*

SCENE IV.—*A large court of the Palace, with colonnade, entrances to various apartments, baths, &c.*

Enter ELECTRA from an apartment, R., with a sword.

Elec. This, this was wanting to a day of justice.
Well have I kept thee, dreadful instrument
Of crime and retribution. Thou dumb minister
Of wrath, I almost fear to look upon thee.
Clear is thy polish ; and no spot or stain
Tells the pleased eye how many deaths are on thee.
Think they, who forge these instruments, what work
The steel they labour may perform ?—Who comes ?—
Only to one can I resign this weapon. [*Conceals it.*

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA, R., and CHRYSOTHEMIS, L.

Cly. Electra here ! Say, hast thou seen Ægisthus ?

Elec. Oh, wretched woman ! is thy care for him ?
Think of thy noble son, from death redeem'd ;
Nor wound my ears with that vile ribald's name.
His meed awaits him. Hark ! the cry of vengeance
Is in the gate. 'Tis he—I know the voice

Cly. How shall I meet him ?

[*ORESTES is heard without, R., gradually nearer.*

Orest. [*Without.*] Ho ! come forth, Ægisthus !
Come forth, thou coward !

Chry. [*To CLYTEMNESTRA*] We will intercede—
A sister's prayers—

Enter ORESTES, R., in a paroxysm of fury

Orest. Ægisthus ! Where, where is he ?

Where lurks the coward ? Bring him forth !

[To CLYTEMNESTRA] What, thou here,
To bar my way to vengeance ! Stand aside—
My rage is up. Nature has but one word—
'Tis vengeance.

Cly. Oh, my son !

Orest. Away ! bad mother !
Coward ! where art thou ? Hide him not. Thy robe
Shall be no sanctuary.

Elec. Hear me, brother !

Orest. Electra ! Stay me not—my rage consumes
me,
Until that murderer's blood is shed.

Elec. Behold
Thy fated weapon ! Throw aside that sword :
'This is the steel by which my father fell.

Cly. Oh, save me ! save me !

Orest. Welcome, thou dread weapon !
No edge but thine was proper to this deed.

[CLYTEMNESTRA *shudders.*
What ! does it fear thee now ? There was a time
It should have shaken thee with stronger horror
To look upon it.

Elec. Ay, there ! behold ! the bath—
Within that door—

Orest. The weapon—and the place—
And she brought hither !—Is it fated ?

Cly. Ah !

[*He looks hastily at the sword, at the door, and
at CLYTEMNESTRA by turns. She is dread-
fully agitated—at length she throws open her
arms.*

Strike, strike the bosom that has nourish'd thee

Orest. The Gods preserve me from so dire an act !
I tremble but to think it possible.

Cly. Then nature's voice is heard. [*Advancing.*

Orest. Off ! touch me not !
Look there ! [*Pointing to the door.*—and then approach
me, if thou darest.

But where, where is thy vile associate ?
Come forth ! foul murderer.

Elec. By the postern court
He left the palace with his guards : doubtless
He thought to fall upon thee so

Orest. He falls
Upon destruction when he meets this eye.
Which way ?—

Elec. Through that arcade.

Orest. Enough. [*Exit, L. U. E.—Without.*] Ægisthus!
[*ORESTES calls, more distant.*] Ægisthus!

Chry. Terrible,
My sister, is his rage.

Elec. It well becomes
The day, and the occasion.

Cly. [*After musing.*] Yes—I'll go—
I yet may save him from that dreadful wrath.

Elec. Save him? Thou wilt not, canst not, dare attempt it!

Cly. I dare—I will—I may save either—both.

Elec. The Gods and his good cause protect Orestes!
But, for that vile one—leave him to his fate.
Shame thee not more in vain.

Cly. His fate is mine—
I am resolved. [*While she has been speaking, she has unconsciously drawn nearer to the door of the baths—on turning to go, she finds herself close to it.*]

Ah! not that way. [*Exit, L. U. E.*

Chry. Stay, mother.

Elec. In vain thy kindness calls. The hand of fate
Is on her. Death goes with her, a companion.
Her destiny will be accomplish'd.

Chry. Dreadful!
She is our mother.

Elec. Sister, thy young mind
Faintly retains the image of our father.
Ere the long Trojan war withheld him from us.
I was of age to value his caresses,
And feel the richness of a father's love;
The dearer to me from comparison
With our fierce mother's practice.

Chry. Hark! again
The din approaches. Let us haste within,
And shun the neighbourhood of death and horror.

Elec. Nay, let us rather issue forth, and learn
How my brave brother speeds.

Chry. Go forth among them.
And mix with clamour, blood, and wounds, and death!

Elec. Are we not Agamemnon's daughters?

Chry. Sister,
In pity leave me not. I dare not go:
And here alone to stay, while fearful work
Is doing round me—oh, can I endure it?

Elec. I will not leave thee :—soon this dreadful strife
Must be determined. Wherefore should I tremble ?
It is the day for which my soul has long'd ;
For which alone I bore years of affliction.
Quail not, thou coward flesh !—that is the part
Of guilty substance. [*Shouts heard, L. U. E.*] Hark ! the
storm comes on,

Charged with the elements of death. Again
That shout—and, hark ! again. Such is the sound
Should herald mighty deeds. [*Silence—a pause.*

Chry. This sudden stillness
Is terrible ! [*Silence—loud thunder*

Eternal Powers of justice !
What is your will, so awfully announced ?

*Enter, L. U. E., rushing in, in terror, ÆGISTHUS, bloody,
a broken sword in his hand.*

Æg. The flood comes raging on. Is there no rock
Of safety I may gain ? A thousand swords
Ride on the front of the tremendous wave
That roars for my destruction. In the storm
Fierce-eyed Orestes rushes, shouting vengeance.
Crumble, ye columns, round me ! Fall on me,
Ye walls ! so I may 'scape that dreadful look,
And hear no more that cry. The tomb gives up
Its dead, to look upon my death. The form
Of Agamemnon, as I pass'd, rose on me.
Methought he smiled--[*Shout, L.*]--Again that cry ! What
way

For flight is left ? They have begirt me round,
And I am in the toils.

Orest. [*Without, L.*] Where lurks the coward ?

Elee. Ye righteous powers ! perfect your righteous
work

Chry. I faint with terror.

Æg. Curse on the frail steel
That fail'd my utmost need !

Orest. [*Without, L.*] *Ægisthus, ho !*
Come forth !

Æg. No aid !—no hope !—Despair ! be thou
'To me for courage. [*He sees the sword left by ORESTES.*
Ah ! a sword ! [*Snatches it up.*

Chry. Oh, Heaven !

Æg. This yet may serve my arm.

Orest. [*Without.*] Where hides the coward

Enter ORESTES, L.

Where lurks the murderous and sensual beast ?
Ha ! art thou found ? Ye Gods, I thank you !—Die—
Die—a thousand deaths in one.

[*He rushes on ÆGISTHUS, who makes an irresolute
show of resistance, strikes down his sword, with
one hand drives him against the door of the
Bath, R. U. E., and there kills him.*]

Lie there,

And on the groundsel thy accursed feet
O'erstepp'd when stealing to my father's murder
Let thy blood flow.

Chry. A fearful deed !

Elec. But just.

Safe art thou, brother. There all danger lies.

Our father is avenged ; and thou art king
In Argos now, unquestion'd. Stand not so
In trouble. Let us thank the Gods.

Orest. My heart

Knows not the peace that Justice ought to give.
'Twas guilt I punish'd.—Wherefore do I shudder ?

Elec. Not soon the tempest of the passions settles,
When roused as thine have been. My mother comes
not.

Orest. Let me not see her now. May her own heart
Furnish the medicine of remorseless thoughts !
Be it not mine to wound a mother.

Elec. Lo !

Thy friend, to share the joy of thy success.

Enter PYLADES, ARCAS, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

R. U. E.

But, with a brow so sad, who ever wore
A joyful breast ?

Orest. My Pylades ! my brother !

Pyl. [*Solemnly.*] Orestes ! when from Delphos we
return'd,

Remember well, I had thy holiest promise,
'Through all our perilous attempt to move
By my directing ? Was't not so ?

Orest. It was.

Pyl. How ill thy vehemence that promise kept
Thy sister can attest. Now make amends—
Give me that sword.

Orest. This sword !

Pyl Nay, question not

Orest. 'Tis thine,

[*ARCAS secures the sword formerly thrown down by ORESTES, and used by ÆGISTHUS.*]

Its dreadful work is done.

Pyl.

Dreadfu

Indeed! and dreadfully the oracle

Is now fulfill'd. Oh, my unhappy friend!

Orest. Oh, by the sanctity of our true friendship,
tell me,

Tell me what mean those words, those boding looks!
In pity speak!

Pyl. It must be told—Thy mother—

Orest. Ah, what of her? Speak—

Pyl.

Is no more.

Orest.

Oh Heaven!

Rashly by her own hand?

Pyl.

'Twas sad mischance,

If that be chance which oracles foretell.—

When on the miscreant that lies there thy sword

Was lifted, and thy blow shiver'd his blade,

Before thee Clytemnestra rush'd. Thine eye

Saw nothing but Ægisthus: no, not her,

Who, clinging to thee, favour'd his escape,

Bought dearly with her life. For on thy sword,

Whirl'd round at random in thy rage, she fell.

Chry. Oh fearful day!

Elec.

Oh, miserable brother!

[*ORESTES, who has listened with horror, stands as if stupefied—then speaks in broken accents.*]

Orest. Ye Powers, that deal with your poor instruments

At your high pleasure! All things swim around me;

My voice is choked; and in my lab'ring throat

The accents rattle.—What these hands have done

Was not my will. My heart—my heart is guiltless.

[*He falls into the arms of ARCAS, PYLADES standing over him. Some of the Attendants gather round the Sisters.*]

Pyl. O Heaven! inscrutable are thy decrees.

[*The curtain falls.*]

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